Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

http://www.archive.org/details/visionoflifesemb00palgrich

A VISION OF LIFE

All rights reserved

A

VISION OF LIFE

Semblance and Reality

BY

WILLIAM GIFFORD PALGRAVE

SOMETIME SCHOLAR OF TRINITY COLLEGE, OXFORD
AND HER MAJESTY'S MINISTER RESIDENT IN URUGUAY

——Canterò di quel secondo regno,
Ove l' umano spirito si purga,
E di salire al Ciel diventa degno.

London
MACMILLAN AND CO.
AND NEW YORK
1891

LOAN STACK

Printed by R. & R. Clark, *Edinburgh.*

PR5115
P54V5

PREFACE

"By the death of Mr. William Gifford Palgrave, the accomplished and adventurous traveller whose journey through Arabia in 1862-63 attracted such universal attention, the Royal Geographical Society loses one of its most distinguished members. The event occurred at Montevideo, where he was serving as British Minister to the Republic of Uruguay. He was the second son of Sir Francis Palgrave, the famous historian and Deputy-Keeper of the Public Records, and was born in Westminster on January 24, 1826. Like his eldest brother Francis, he was educated at the Charterhouse, and left that school with all the honours which a schoolboy can gain on entering on a University career. He obtained a scholarship at Trinity College, Oxford, his eldest brother having already entered at Balliol. At the early age of twenty, after an academical residence of only two years and a half, he took his First Class in Classics, in which class are to be found in the same year other distinguished names, such as W. Bright, J. Conington, and W. Ince, while T. G. Baring, the present Lord Northbrook, was in the Second Class. Palgrave also

gained in the same Honour Schools a Second Class in Mathematics. On leaving the University without seeking any further distinction, he entered the Army and served as a lieutenant in a regiment of Bombay Native Infantry. From childhood he had shown himself fearless and energetic in the first degree, far-thoughted and full of resource, and now, bringing into the Indian Service the fruits of an education more varied and complete (in the field of military mathematics especially) than, at that time at least, fell commonly to the lot of officers, and having inherited his father's instinct for language, a brilliant career was expected for him by his superiors. But an early passion for mission work among the Arab races, aroused by the translation of the old Arabian romance, *Antar*, now returned upon him with overmastering force. Within a few years he quitted the Army, and was received into a house of the Jesuit Fathers in the Madras Presidency; this being the nearest accessible to him.

Whilst faithful throughout to family affections, and loyal to old friendships and memories with the strength of a strong nature, to the work of that Order he devotedly gave himself for about fifteen years; first in Southern India, then (for completion of the requisite studies) in Rome, until the dream of his boyhood was finally accomplished by his mission to Syria and Palestine. He now made himself master of Arabic habits of life, of the religion, literature, and language; not only preaching extempore to vast crowds (and the Arabian crowd is said to be critical in the niceties of their beautiful and copious tongue), but writing hymns which were sung through the country. Meanwhile the Druse persecution

broke out, and had not the rules of his Order stringently forbidden it, he must, as he stated, have yielded to the urgent prayer of the Maronite Christians, and put himself at the head of their inexperienced forces;—just escaping with life from Damascus, after giving advice as to the defence of the city which the Maronite leaders feared to follow. As the Mission of Beyrout was broken up for the time, Palgrave determined to penetrate Arabia through its centre, with the object of ascertaining whether it would be ultimately possible to enter that sealed land as a Christian teacher. To aid him in this journey, with due allowance on the part of his religious superiors, he accepted a commission from the late Emperor Napoleon to report to him on various matters connected with Arabia, in which the Emperor was much interested. He had fulfilled his mission in 1863, when, finding it hopeless to go on further with his object, he returned to Europe, quitting the Jesuits soon after. At one of our meetings, in February 1864, he delighted the Society with the account of his journey and adventures, and in 1865 he published his *Narrative of a Year's Journey through Central and Eastern Arabia*, one of the most interesting and romantic books of travel and adventure that have ever delighted the public.

Except for Dr. Wallin's journey across the country in 1848, and the less important one of Capt. Sadleir, nothing had been heard of the interior of the Arabian Peninsula in recent times, and there was a vague idea that the country was dominated by the fierce and intolerant Wahabis, and quite inaccessible to Europeans. Palgrave was thoroughly competent to pass as a Mahomedan; but no disguise of this nature was needed,

and it was, in fact, in the character of a native Syrian doctor, about whose form of religion no one concerned himself, that he entered Arabia; the stress of danger in those parts, as he well knew, lying not in his faith, but in his European nationality. As has already been said, his familiarity with the language and habits was perfect, but nevertheless he carried his life in his hand, and he nearly lost it. He had penetrated as far as Haîll when his fame as a learned stranger brought him a summons to Court. In the course of an interview with one of the Princes, he was recognised by two persons who had seen him in Damascus, and the success of his undertaking, if not his life, was in imminent peril. Palgrave managed to evade the suspicion for the time; but when he boldly went on into the interior of the peninsula, he had a still narrower escape at Riadh—the headquarters of the strictest and gloomiest Wahabi fanaticism—where the Prince Abd-allah discovered his real character and threatened him with assassination. He escaped this peril only by flight from the city, and passed without harm right through Arabia to the kingdom of Muscat, at the south-eastern corner of the country.

In 1865, Mr. Palgrave was employed on special work by the English Government, whose diplomatic service he now entered for the first time, in negotiating for the release of Consul Cameron and other prisoners in Abyssinia. From that time his history is contained in the records of the diplomatic and foreign service of this country. He was successively appointed Consul at Soukhoum Kalé, 1866, Consul at Trebizond, 1867, at St. Thomas, 1873, at Manila, 1876, and Consul-General in Bulgaria in 1878. In March 1872, he

favoured the Society by reading, at an evening meeting, a paper on the country between Trebizond and the Upper Euphrates, over which he had travelled during the period of his consulate at the former place, and in which he gave a vivid account of the Lazes, who were newly settled in the region. He was transferred to Bangkok in 1879, and in 1884 he was promoted to be Minister Resident and Consul-General to the Republic of Uruguay, in the capital of which State he has just died at his post. In 1868 he married Katharine (daughter of Mr. G. E. Simpson of Norwich), by whom he left three sons. A life so adventurous had severely tried his naturally-strong vital powers, and the winters of Uruguay, cold to one who had passed many years in the tropics, may have favoured the development of bronchitis, to which he suddenly succumbed. His body now lies in S. Thomas' Cemetery, Fulham:—*Requiem aeternam dona ei*, Domine, *et lux perpetua luceat ei.*

Besides the work which made him famous, he was also the author of *Essays on Eastern Questions*, 1872; *Hermann Agha, an Eastern Narrative*, 1872; *Dutch Guiana*, 1876; and *Ulysses*, a series of scenes in many lands, in 1887.

Ulysses, though the author had not this meaning in view, was indeed no ill-chosen name for one not only so wide a traveller, so quick an observer and vivid a painter of the *mores hominum multorum*, but whose versatility and mental acuteness led him also to be a keen and devoted student of the best literature of many nations. Beside his familiarity with the extensive poetical treasures of Arabia, he knew the *Commedia* of Dante almost by heart; and English poetry of the

highest order was constantly in his hands and on his lips. The lucid brilliancy of style remarked in his Arabian narrative, in fact, was due to these studies; he regained the purity of his native language, after many years spent almost wholly amongst foreigners, by a careful six months' preparatory work among the masterpieces of English literature. To his command over Asiatic languages he must also have been much indebted for the strong hold of loyalty and affection which he had throughout over the various native races amongst whom he was called to work, in a career which, we think, may correctly be described as adventurous, honourable, and useful, in no narrow measure. In whatever sphere of labour he found himself, intrepid devotedness to the duty before him was the abiding note of his character.

Mr. Palgrave became a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society in 1878, and on his return to Europe after his journey through Arabia, he received the gold medal of the French Geographical Society."

With exception of a few added words, the above notice has been reprinted (under permission) from the *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society* for November, 1888. Some further details must, however, be given in explanation of the circumstances in which the following poem was written, and the manner in which it is now presented.

Although autobiographical facts are almost wholly absent, yet the *Pageant of Life* (the author's long-since chosen title, given up owing to the accident of its use elsewhere prior to the publication of this volume,) is so

deeply coloured throughout by his thoughts and experiences of man and of nature under many skies, that a few words upon his own inner life seem required for a fair understanding and estimate of the poem.

With a lively aptitude for study, for language, and for writing prose and verse, which showed itself in boyhood, the writer's mind was from the first of a markedly receptive order; in a high degree candid and open to new impressions, which the imaginative and impulsive bias of his mind, united to bold energy of character, was always ready to translate into action. Hence the fluctuations of opinion, — the successive waves of conviction, — upon the main problems of human life which his course exhibited: Surrendering an English professional career for the Indian Army; joining next the Roman Communion; then devoting all his energies to the Society of Jesus, and quitting it when disappointed of a Missioner's work in Arabia, as noticed in the narrative prefixed. This relinquishment of the aims of life, pursued hitherto with conviction and the zeal of youth, when just at the *mezzo cammin*, soon led him further. He drifted gradually from the Church of his adoption; and, like other Englishmen who have lived much in the East and penetrated into its mysterious secrets of thought and existence, — things often unknown and inexplicable to Western civilization, — he was in turn penetrated himself by the surrounding atmosphere and strange fascination of India, Siam, and China; Japan, above all, mastering him awhile by the spell which, in different ways, she has laid upon many of our countrymen. In the primitive nature-worship of that Empire, the *Shinto* system as it has been named, an old religion

progressively less revised, and hence contains matter,—in total length equivalent to about fourteen cantos,—either distinctly inferior in style or in interest to the bulk of the poem,—or, when we reach the later songs, undecipherable. That the writer was diligent with the "labour of the file," largely changing and improving his work, is shown, not only by comparison of the successive transcripts, but by the repetition of words and figures which the less thoroughly finished portion exhibits; and the belief seems to be hence justified that the omissions now made would have been consonant to his wish. Yet, except in the single case already noted, nothing has been excluded on the ground of the opinions or views of life expressed:—though whether these outspoken utterances, as upon Physical Science, Trade, and Manufactures, would have been always printed as they now stand, must also remain undecided. The shadow of death,—sudden, solitary, and unexpected, without one conscious instant allowed for the *novissima verba*,—renders all such speculation futile.

Similar considerations apply to several real or apparent inconsistencies which may be observed, even where the poem has received more or less revisal. The universal sway of the twin Powers, Life and Death, seems to be in one part forgotten or arbitrarily limited; the geography of the Vision is occasionally obscure; the Seven Kingdoms themselves are not very clearly discriminated, their boundaries in some degree remain indistinct; the same characters once or twice recur in different regions. The poem, on these points, diverges widely from the clear lines followed everywhere by the *Divina Commedia*; although upon that great work, the Second and Third

divisions especially, it is so largely modelled that this story of "the Intermediate Realm" might also almost have been entitled a Purgatory of Man:—on which ground the motto prefixed has been selected for it. And those familiar with the *Commedia* will recognize easily here and there passages or forms of phrase transfused from it.

Owing to the peculiar circumstances in which this *Vision of Life*,—as, with some loss of clear definition, it has been perforce renamed,—appears, a few more words upon the plan of editing adopted must be given. Except in a very few cases of obvious *lapsus calami* (generally placed within square brackets), the autograph text, when ascertainable, has been rigidly followed, and merely conjectural emendation excluded. Dubious readings are marked * *; longer passages, uncertain or obviously uncorrected, † †. For the First Book, the author's fourth draft has been available; for Book II, cantos 1 to 20, a third draft; from canto 21 to the 18th of Book III, the second; thence to the end only the first rough MS. exists. Except, however, twelve lines near the beginning of Book III, canto 11, the whole poem was approximately completed.

Brief as the notes are, readers, it is thought, will find them useful in identifying persons or places named. Some allusions, however, remain untraced.

In conclusion: How to deal with a work, left as this, has been perplexing. To exclude, or to present only in short independent extracts, whatever had not been fully, or almost fully, revised, would have offered a poem too fragmentary to be generally readable, or satisfactory to such "fit audience" as the author must have intended

to address. To print the whole, for reasons already assigned (without dwelling on its length, and metre unusual to the English ear), would have been unjust to the writer. By the plan here adopted (for which Professor Craik's abridgment of Spenser's great romance has supplied the model), it is hoped that an acceptable middle course has been found, and that the less perfect finish of the latter half will be pardoned in favour of that continuity of the whole which the arrangement here offered aims throughout at preserving.

August, 1891.

BOOK I

(The summaries of Book I. are taken or adapted from the Author's marginal notes. Those to Books II. and III. have been framed from the text.)

CANTO I

I wander back to the Valley of Vision, which I had entered as a child, and find it desolate—I see my own spectre surrounded by evil memories, but no release—A deliverer appears—His double likeness—I entreat his help—He offers to lead me to the Kingdom of Life—I assent, and ask the meaning of the Vision—He declares himself the ruling Spirit of Canopus, my spiritual ruler and brother.

By devious ways, that recks not here to tell,
Far had I wandered, till the circling maze
Of that long error brought me to the dell
Whence was my starting in the spring-tide days
When life was mine, an unspent heritage;
Rich in large promise of well-meeded praise,
And the great vision of the untried age.
O happy dell, within whose grass-rimmed bound
Was a whole world to me, my fledgling cage
Wider than freedom, where th' encircling mound
Close vaulted o'er with heaven's own flawless blue
Shut out each meaner sight, each dissonant sound.
"Here then," said I, "th' horizon of my view,
End of my travel toil, bourne of my quest;
No more I crave, no further path pursue."

Ah vain! as finds at eve the bird her nest,
Love's casket left and home, by some rude hand
Rifled and spoiled, so I my fancied rest.
Nor grass was there nor flower, but drifted sand,
Life's mere despair; sand-heaped the toilsome track
Led to blank loneness; not th' accursed land
Of swart Zeboim, nor the ridges black
Of fire-scathed Skaptar showed more desolate
Than my loved haunt, now ruined. To turn me back
I strove, but could not; forced to pause and wait
What next might there befal me: a dense haze
Gathered around, then cleared; and lo! the gate
As of a broken fane, reared in the days
Of Ammon or Sesostris, void and lone
'Mid the drift-whitening sands, athwart the blaze
Of a down-slanted sun; the blackened stone
Glared to the Western heat, for sunk the day
From noon, nor yet to evening coolness grown.
There in the mid blaze of the scorching ray
Careless, as it and balmiest shade were one,
Dust-soiled his vesture, scant his hair and grey,
Motionless sat, as by long toil o'erdone,
What seemed a man, yet seemed not; fixed his look
As a blank page, where writing razed or none;
Statue-like, stone-like, death-like; silence took
More silence from that form; nor voice nor sound
Waked the lone vale of joy and hope forsook.
But as o'er some dank patch of swampy ground
Hovers a fluttering crowd of noisome things
Liveliest where most the life-slaying damps abound;
Or as the autumn crows, whose flapping wings
Darken about some tree bark-stripped and dead
That wide o'er the bare field its branches flings,
Unnumbered shapes flew ceaseless round the head
Of that dim form the shattered gate before,
Now clustering thick, now in loose circles spread.

Of thin pellucid air the semblance wore
Those shapes, some human, some to bird or beast
Or reptile fashioned; taloned some who bore
Strange circlets like to diadems; the ill feast[1]
Of Oetus showed such harpies; so the host
Of phantoms wildly driven nor paused nor ceased.
Some threatening scowled, some laughed in mockful boast
Some beckoning leered, some pale with rage or pain
Fled past, like smoke-wreaths by a whirlwind tost;
But vain as dreams the threats, th' allurements vain.
And nought I understood, so the strong trance
Held me, like one bound in a sorcerer's chain.
And still the sun, as though to Gideon's lance
Obedient, stayed his course, nor sought the West,
And still in air the phantoms wove their dance.
As one who knows the night-hag on his breast,
And struggles hard in sleep, and strives to wake,
So I, by that weird wretchedness opprest,
Struggled; but nought availed the spell to break,
Till gleamed a sudden splendour on my right,
Like the quick glitter of a breeze-swept lake.
And as at dawn the wide-winged birds of night
Fly to their thicket coverts, fled the brood
Hateful, o'ermastered by that radiant might.
There on a rising ground beside me stood
One as in manhood's prime with beauty clad
And strength serene, from life's own fount renewed;—
Ah, how unlike the withered form and sad
By yon lone portal! yet in secret wise
A brother's semblance each to the other had:
Two lamps, twin-fold in fashioned form and size,
But lightless one, one with translucent flame
A glowing orb, too bright for gazing eyes.
"O thou, whoe'er thou art, whate'er thy name,

[1] Unidentifiable. Oetus was a giant, son of Neptune.

"Or man, or surely god, attend my cry;
So be my weakness to thy succour claim.
Rescue me from this death-stricken vale, where I
Am prisoner, my own folly's proper meed."
Weeping I spoke, my hands outstretched on high.
"Nor god nor man thou seest; yet thy worst need
Is by my power outweighed; mine 'tis to grant
More than thou ask'st or dream'st of; mine to lead
To the true land, fair life's inviolate haunt,
If that thou darest; else vain th' attempted way,"
Thus he, "nor help avails where courage scant."
"O heaven-sent guide," I answered, "no delay
Be mine, I give me to thy absolute guard,
Nor doubt thy skill, nor fear thy power t' assay.
But who art thou that hast me in regard
So watchful? whence the love that to my side
Has brought thee, where all else is void or marred?
Why moves not heaven's great lamp to eventide?
And whose the form, phantom bested, yet lone
That sits and waits the desolate porch beside?"
"Well hast thou asked," he answered, "trust unknown
Is undeserved; not such thy trust shall be,
Nor far apart my kinship from thy own.
In nature one, though differing in degree
As high from low may differ: More would'st learn?
At the bright portals of eternity
My dwelling is; there 'midst the lamps that burn
Hung round the prow of the translated bark
Fabled of Colchos, well may'st thou discern
The ruddy fire[1] whose new-risen splendours mark
Syria's young year, what time the lessening glow
Of Autumn twilight fades into the dark,
Dark not to us but you; th' alternate show

[1] Canopus; a star of the first magnitude in the rudder of the southern constellation Argo, named after the ship in which Iason sailed for the Golden Fleece.

"Of night and day reaches us not; we bear
Light in ourselves, nor change nor shadow know.
Chiefest of such, outmeasuring all compare
Am I, from Egypt named by those of old
Who thought earth's types with typeless heaven to share.
And mine th' ethereal, thine the human mould.
Yet brothers we, linked in the enduring chain
Fate-knit, that binds us in its circled fold.
Now mark; whatever land, air, sea contain
Through this moon-tended moon called Earth, compelled
By law of birth to want, desire, and pain,
Has in our realm its counterpart, where eld,
Pain, want, desire abide not; but the blaze
Of the great Summer by no Autumn quelled
This the perfection of th' imperfect days,
Time's measurement as ye hold them; yet the end
On other heights abides, and loftier praise.
The hues of childhood's prism, the worshipped friend
Of boyhood, youth's gay dreams, love's extasy,
All that man's thought can reach or hope pretend,
Are of our fullness; thine they were, but I
Their truth, their meaning; me without, thy might
Were weakness all, thy straightest path awry.
And farther realms than these, to mortal sight
Denied, are mine to show; the ultimate scope
Of separate life, the one, the infinite.
Far o'er the star-strewed vault's unmeasured cope
As that thy earth surpasses, thence above
Love drew me down; in me thy strength, thy hope,
Portion and part in th' all compelling Love."

CANTO II

The Spirit partly reveals himself—He explains the meaning of the Valley of Illusion, and how I may be delivered—He points to my Spectre, in which I see the defacement of my past life, and fall senseless—He restores me to life through the remorse of self-knowledge, and promises to show the entire truth of human life, in its earthly and in its spiritual phase—I assent; he commends my resolution, and proceeds to explain the Pageant—An extasy.

THE ray that from the morn-lit East outspread
  Fires in the opposing West the pallid snow
Of sóme far mountain range to rosy red,
As the mere shade of foggiest night would show
  Compared with the bright flush that lit with flame,
At name of Love pronounced, my guardian's brow.
And the dead air around to that dear name
  Quivering awaked to life and melody,
And tinted green o'er the parched sand-heaps came.
Then he spoke on; "In the lone wastes and dry
  Where thou hast strayed, myriads have strayed before;
But few beheld as thou with filmless eye.
Strong youth, sad manhood, tottering age and hoar,
  Like shattered twigs, heaped in the torrent's bed
Leaf-stripped and mutilate, dry from rind to core;

"Flocks to the pen at dusk of evening led
Of whence or why unheedful, so the train
Of men, soon numbered with th' unnumbered dead.
Yet each fulfils his purposed lot, nor vain
Their joys, their griefs; more suits me not to tell
Nor thee to hear, till passed with me the plain,
Named of Illusion, left the spectral dell
Where sits the Form thou know'st not, nor can'st know
But in thyself, so strong the sensuous spell
Woven by the hours around thee, and the show
Of that which is not, veil of that which is,
As o'er earth's solid bulk the false bright snow,
For an hour's mockery spread." My hand in his
Smiling he took, and straight the touch, the smile
As Spring's first breathings with a new-felt bliss
Thrilled me almost to faintness; calm the while
He pointed where in the ghost-haunted field
Sat the lone Form beside that granite pile.
And as some tower that by the tangled shield
Of trees half hid, sudden to nearer view
Stands out distinct in its own lines revealed,
Even thus, nor dim nor doubtful now, nor new,
But as fresh issuing from the founder's mould
Fronting me there, my very self I knew.
"By this torn is the veil, the story told,
What thou hast made thee in the ill-spent years;
What once thou wast, what now thou art, behold."
Such were the words, not sounded to my ears,
But to my eyes declared in pictured shame
Not by repentance razed nor washed by tears.
Vain pleasures, causeless sorrow, merited blame,
Blind error, impotent striving, dead despair,
And the worse dread that owns nor form nor name
In that one view before me mirrored were.
Yet mine not theirs the substance, shadows they;

Mine the ill truth in truth reflected there.
As sweeps th' eclipse o'er heaven and blots the day
Both thought and life were by that ugly sight
Blotted, and senseless on the ground I lay.
O mine too well deserved, if endless, night!
O just requital of the thriftless ill
Whose life is death, so lived in life's despite!
But that predestined Love whose brotherly skill
In love and pity wrought my overthrow,
For healing dealt the blow that seemed to kill.
And now my eyes reopened; faint and slow
Life to her seat returned, and the stunned brain
Once more made answer to the pulses' flow.
Not gentler on the battle's trampled plain
A father's hands his wounded son may tend
Lest some chance touch rewake the sense of pain,
Than my guide bent t' upraise me. "Reached the end
Hast thou of error," such his words, "for truth
Till self be known, with error still must blend.
Sharp talons has remorse, and keen her tooth.
Yet none but she has power to rend away
The Nessus-garment[1] round the limbs of youth
Wrapped by self-love. Dark night preludes the day,
And birth has pain; and the long-blinded eye
Through sharpest smart opes to the visible ray.
Now past the birth-pangs, day-illumed the sky;
Now thy healed sight may the hid things behold
O'er-flourished else by earth's vain imagery.
The path thy childhood's footsteps traced of old
In ignorant blindness, through my guidance now
Shall its veiled secrets to thy eyes unfold.
And other paths by others trod, and how
The mazy errors of the profitless years
To unwise feet nor rest nor goal allow,

[1] That which, poisoned by the blood of the Centaur Nessus, burned Herakles.

"These shalt thou see; the hopes, the dreams, the fears,
The hollow phantasms of the long unrest
That men call Life; but Death the name it bears
To us, th' unborn, th' undying; at my hest
All these shall to thy ken naked and bare
Stand forth, in their true form and guise exprest.
Till thou with me shalt climb the difficult stair
That leads to the glad height, the purposed home,
Where what time marred th' eternal years repair
And perfect. Rouse thee, brother; not the dome
Of far-off heaven could from thy need divide
My love; let thine from me no longer roam."
"O long desired, late found, my spirit's guide
In more than union, of my heart the heart,"
Speechless myself, my tears for speech replied;
"How could I for one hour from thee depart?
Can self from self be sundered? Lo, to thee
I give me wholly up; nor joy nor smart
Save as thou will'st I know; thine, thine to be
Is my sole choice: I follow, should'st thou lead
Even not to life's but death's eternity."
"Well hast thou said," he answered; "be thy deed
Seal to thy word; to firm resolve and high
Justice and love apportion equal meed.
The pearl of price no earthly price may buy,
The gain to which all other gain is loss,
Behold them; these are thine, and these am I.
O for this treasure well-rejected dross!
O for these joys well-borne extremest toil!
O for such kingdom well-adventured cross!
Few they who free them from the tangling coil
Of the false snake that binds the world around
And of thy kindred makes his choicest spoil."
A while as one whom difficult thoughts astound
He paused, then thus continued; "The worse fate
Is for long years in lower circles bound,

"Till worthy made by proof t' approach the gate
Where quicker sped soon shall thy footsteps stand;
Not thy deserving, but the appointed date
To thee, to each, by the determining hand
Marked on the zodiac dial, that onward moves,
Nor prayer nor question heeds, nor owns command
Save what its power allows, or will approves,
And self-sustained through manifold form and change
Changeless for ever lives, for ever loves.
In this thy birthright, this th' apportioned range,
This the great spell that linked with mine thy sphere,
In bonds no blame may loose, no ills estrange."
He ceased; I answered not, by sudden fear
Made dumb, so bright the splendour which o'erspread
Sudden the vale, till vanished all that ere
Had captive held my sight, the semblance dread
Of my own folly and shame, the ruined fane,
The dell, the motionless sun: and in their stead
Dome-like heaven's infinite blue o'erarched the plain
Unflecked from marge to zenith; and above,
As in earth's skies Hyperion's noontide reign,
Midmost and loftiest throned the eternal Love.

CANTO III

Invocation of Dante—The beginnings of Life, with only individual differentiation, under the form of atoms tending to a farther goal—My guidē explains their nature and progress, and how they arrive at actual personality by entering on the Life of Sense—The Gate of the Life of Sense and Personality, through which the Spirit Life must pass—I wonder at their willingness: till I see the potential life in every atom, tending towards fulfilment—The beginnings of Life.

O Poet, and more than poet, with glory crowned
  Not by thy Florence only, thou whose head
The triplicate laurels of three worlds surround,
Thou through all mortal, all immortal led
  By her whom the third circle claims, till past
Each height, thou saw'st heaven's self beneath thee spread
In love made one with the Highest, hear the last
  The meanest of thy kindred; be thy fire
Within me, be thy mantle o'er me cast
Thou know'st how rough the upward road, and higher
  Than unassisted my weak steps can climb
Rise the steep summits of my song's desire.
The path by thee first marked in happier time,
  Untrod since then, be it mine again to trace
Led by the echo of the Master's rhyme.

Now to my task. Around I looked, the place
Changed from its luminous stillness, as a dream
Changes, when busier shapes the first efface.
The air was thick as with an eddying stream
In countless circles drawn; till earth and sky
Flickered uncertain through the vaporous gleam.
Nor what that vapour's self could I descry,
So dense, so swift it rolled, till watchful heed
With knowledge more exact informed my eye.
Close-herded crows that to warm roof-tops speed
Thwart the pale wintry eve, when other home,
Forest and field snow-whelmed, deny their need;
Motes in a ray cross-slanted through the gloom
Of some oak-panelled chamber, where a rift
Lets in strange light on the ghost-tenanted room,
Are not so frequent as that limitless drift
From far-off distance swept across the plain
Of specks unnumbered; some with motion swift
Whirled upwards, downwards; some like Autumn rain
From the sky's depths came thronging; some delayed
Self-clogged in intricate mazes, till the chain
Of their mad dance in the air uncertain swayed;
Each of the other heedless, uncontrolled
As summer flies in the dank forest shade.
Yet as white mountain vapours fold on fold
Cling to the rocks, then up the pass are driven
From cliff to cliff by steady winds uprolled,
So to the stream of those bright motes uneven
Or swiftly onward whirled, or lingering slow,
One common impulse to their course was given.
Long time I gazed, by the multitudinous show
Dazzled, bewildered, nor could aught discern
Nor whence derived nor whither bound its flow.
Then to my guide I turned, from him to learn
What my eye taught not; but more swift his thought
To the yet unworded question made return,

"Beyond all time, all space, thy gaze is brought
Near to the fountain source, whence ever stream
The countless lives to separate being wrought
By the high Love that is and reigns supreme,
And from the stores of unexhausted will
Fashions the shapes of th' universal dream,
Itself their waking. Blindly they fulfil
Their purposed end, as mirrors dulled or bright,
Smooth or distorted, each one surface still
Reflects some ray of the unconditioned light,
Some line of that all-perfect loveliness,
Some partial trace of self-subsistent might.
All in their source are equal; none may guess
How mote differs from mote, or spark from spark,
Nor this forecast to greater, that to less,
Till each has passed the portal wide and dark
That entrance gives on the uncertain state
Of sense and time and space; ere then no mark
Is theirs by which to tell their destined fate
Of man, or insect, plant, or beast; the power
Theirs, but deep-hidden in each, till through the gate
To several life they pass; then bursts the flower
From th' undistinguished bud; then first displays
Its proper hues flaunted in life's brief hour;
A life of joys and sorrows, blame and praise,
Threads of the daedal web earth's surface o'er
Wove in the alternate loom of nights and days.
Behold—" He ceased, nor added word, but more
His pointing hand supplied; I looked, and knew
Clear figured all that doubtful seemed before.
So, their long voyage o'er, the sailor crew
Entering the harbour 'twixt out-opening rocks
Watch one by one their house-roofs start to view.
And first as, where Syene's barrier locks
The upward way to Nubia's palm groves, stands
Some temple's huge eternity, and mocks

With stillness of black shade the shifting sands
White and loose-piled, so in the mountain's side
Stood a huge portal, by no human hands
Square-hewn; though entrance here no bar denied;
But all within was darkness, such as fell
On the lost cities of Campania's pride;[1]
Darker than darkness' self; dense, palpable;
No gate with brass and iron thrice banded o'er
Might with such utter blank the sight repel.
And a thin Shadow restless evermore
Hovered about the lintel, as with wings
Outspread, the guardian of that open door.
As one to whom the sight amazement brings
Not understanding silent gazed I long,
Dull to the meaning of the visioned things,
And why now high now low the atom throng
Of that great mist its course convergent held
Drawn in to vanish those black gulfs among.
And much I pondered by what force compelled
The pure unchartered life should eager haste
To goal of care, disquiet, change, and eld;
And whether sweetness-cloyed it longed to taste
Wilful the bitter draught of personal life,
Or if all will by mightier Will effaced.
While thus I mused with my own thoughts at strife,
From heaven's blue vaults to earth the troubled air
With myriad shapes where had been motes was rife.
All that earth's cycled years incessant bear,
All that has part in sorrow, care, and joy,
All that inherits water, earth, or air,
The babe, the child, the virgin maid, the boy,
The man, the wife, by years withered and blurred,
The corpse corruption claims or flames destroy,
The innumerous tribes of fish, or beast, or bird,
The insect lives recorded in a day,

[1] Herculaneum and Pompeii.

From grade to grade by change and time transferred,
Mustered before me, thronged in such array
As when by midnight's tempest-flash revealed
All hidden things stand forth in clear display,
Mountain and forest, river, town and field
Outlined in perfect form; then swift from sight
Withdraw them; so what erst the veil concealed
Now veil-less, shadow-less in intensest light
Flashed into being; I looked, and wide o'erhead
As mounts the star-pranked heaven height over height,
So was my gaze from range to range upled
Of those bright forms down speeding: not the snows
On Danube's plains by Russian winds outspread
More dense, more ceaseless, when the sentinel rows
Of pine in one dense mass the Balkan hide,
And the dazed guide his baffled toil forgoes.
Even so bewildered by th' interminous tide
Of life, my straining sight to blindness turned,
Nor first nor last nor how nor where descried.
Yet through the wildering eddy dim discerned
Shone the fixed radiance whence all splendours move,
Alone; while at my side unfailing burned
Starlike the brotherly pledge of guiding Love.

CANTO IV

I am summoned to pass the Gate of individual existence—The Guardians of the Gate—The Statues of Life and Death—I ask their meaning—My guide begins to explain, but is interrupted by a Power that compels us to enter the Cavern of Trance—I lose consciousness—Regaining it, I find myself alone in the Land of true Vision, and distinct Existence, and enter on the spiritual counterpart of the surroundings of my childhood at Hampstead—To this I am welcomed.

"THE two-fold guard of th' all-receiving gate
Through which each separate life must pass to be,
Servants and lords of time-apportioned fate,
The twain in whose most seeming enmity
Yet real accord all that has form is bound,
Nor from our duplicate law may flinch or flee,
Till falls the chain to the last link unwound,
Are we, the One in Twain, the Twain in One,
Faithful and true by the True and Faithful found.
Enter the fane, denied the gate to none;
Enter, all leaving, all secure t' attain;
Enter, to know the personal life begun;
Enter, to changeless joy through changeful pain;
Enter, short is the night, the dawning near.
Enter, with love thy guide, in love to reign."
Such words from the dark portal to my ear

Distant yet clear were borne, where idly still
As one held doubtful 'twixt desire and fear
Loitering I stood, nor moved in answer. "Ill
Thou lingerest," said my guide; "no more delay,
Nor clog good succour with lag-footed will.
Behold the imaged semblance, the display
Of the twin Rulers, throned in equal state,
Who 'yond those portals hold inseparate sway."
O wondrous skill that could from stone create
The forms these words expressed! O happy eyes
To view such marvels preordained by fate!
Not fairer sculptures to Athenian skies
Glittered, when Greece the drowsy world and dull
Waked to delight with beauty's new surprise.
By the gateside a youth more beautiful
Than morn's first star I viewed; his clustering hair
With roses crowned; Salerno's maidens pull
No ruddier when Love's festals to prepare
They crown his shrine with flowers; an ivy wreath
Girded his loins, of other vestment bare.
And where he trod, the earth in bloom beneath
Burst forth his feet to kiss; the laughing sky
Poured down its brightest radiance on his path.
In his left hand a bird addressed to fly
Fluttered, grasped in his right a torch he reared,
That light and flame cast forth unceasingly;
Mighty as noontide, clear as joyous morn,
Gentle as mellow evening, fair as day,
Loveliness heaven's own portals fit t' adorn.
But on the opposite side that marged the way
Sculptured a maiden stood, in girdled dress
Close wrapped from head to foot, that none might say
What from all eyes was shrouded; not the less
Beauteous her face, but downcast, as to shun
Too curious gaze; a secret none might guess.
And many asked, but answer found they none

With poppies mixed a wreath of garnered ears
Circled her head; a cup whence one by one
Fell the sad drops that are great Nature's tears,
Her left upbore; empty her right; her feet
Trod the crushed stubble of the outworn years.
Yet the true sister she and consort meet
Of that fair boy; nor was their being twain
But one, though thus in semblance opposite.
"O love to which all other love is vain,"
Thus to my guide I spoke; "instruct me thou
What shapes are these before me sculptured plain,
Yet dark in meaning; whose the rose-girt brow?
Whose the sad wreath Lethean twined? if each,
As rang the voice, a kindred power avow?"
Then he, "Of Life and Death, so human speech
Has named them, these the symbol forms, in one
Known to th' immortals; wisdom hard to teach,
Harder to learn of those beneath the sun,
Though clear to those beyond:" then with quick hand
Upraised to warn, he stayed the words begun.
For now from the dim distance of the land
Rose a strong blast, that to the portal high
Drove, as when whirlwinds drive the desert sand.
With loving care the Master hastily
His robe around me flung; then nearer drew
Me to himself, and said, "The hour is nigh;
Pass we the door with conscious steps by few
Or none thus passed of old." With that the cave
Received us, forfeit to the outer view.
Blackness and silence all; a double grave
Of sense and mind closed o'er me; memory's seal
Effaced, no more to act its conscience gave,
Done or endured; nor might those depths reveal
Aught to th' emergent self; nor the warm beam
Of life renewed the broken links anneal.
So the fallen rain-drop in the eddying stream

Melts undistinguished; so with dreamless sleep
Blends and is lost the unremembered dream.
How long, how wide that blank, the cave how deep,
How from its gloom to a new light we passed,
I know not; those dread shades their secret keep.
When first my sight regained around I cast,
Midmost in a fair land alone I stood;
Nor cave was there, nor phantom-haunted blast,
But round me grassy uplands with dark woods
Chequered, and sparkling water-tracks between,
And far off heights of purple solitude.
Yet haunts of men were nigh, though thick the screen
Of hedge-row trees opposed, that through the glade
Where the birds sang nor roof nor spire was seen,
Highgate or Hampstead; bright the sunbeams played
On grass and leaf; and fleecy clouds of Spring
Tempered the golden ray with flying shade.
So forth I wandered, till a crown-like ring
Of branching elms, that on a grassy mound
Mixed with brown firs uprose, as welcoming
To rest from heatful toil, my footsteps found;
And deep in matted grass a little rill
From th' outer plain with coolness fenced it round.
This with slight care I passed, and climbed the hill;
Then on its summit laid me down, half hid
Between the close-set trees, and gazed my fill
Far as the pale horizon's circling lid
O'er groves and meadows, where no rival height
With interposing screen the view forbid.
As one who through drear hours of stormy night
On travel bound, joys at day's dawn to find
Some place of rest, with food and comfort dight;
There the long miles and tedious left behind
Recounting, glad the labours of the way,
Pledges of present ease, he calls to mind;
So stretched beneath those shadowing boughs I lay;

While perils past and pains to pleasures new
By thought transformed, remarshalled their array.
And still warm winds through the great tree-stems blew,
And still in greenest depths the blackbird sung,
And still looked smiling down the o'er-vaulted blue.
Then close, from whence I knew not, music rung;
Clear as pure silver were the notes; they named
Names deep in memory writ, denied the tongue.
And forms familiar erst in love unblamed,
Childhood's or youth's, in their own beauty there
Stood forth, from the lost past by love reclaimed,
And glittering with pure splendour; "Welcome fair!"
They cried, "welcome returning, welcome, led
In thy first life the second life to share.
Welcome: the living we, miscalled the dead,
The destined sharers of thy joy, with thee
Dwellers of the great Orb whose influence shed
Its fullness on thy birth-hour: love's decree
Made us companions of the darkling way
Thou now retread'st, from dream and semblance free."
Thus as they sang, clear and more clear heaven's ray
Sparkled on grass and tree from green to gold
Changed, and the purple hills that farther lay
Were amethyst all; in diamond lustre rolled
The streams, and sapphire-blue the vault above;
While spread self-oped before me fold by fold
The pageant scroll, figured and writ by Love.

CANTO V

A dream of my early boyhood is re-enacted, in which I saw my heart as a snared bird, prisoner to Love—My guide re-appears, and gives the meaning of the dream—We stand on the edge of Hampstead Heath, looking towards London—Spirit aspect of modern London and its inhabitants—Cross of St. Paul's—Modern Progress and Civilisation, as centralised in London—Materialism of modern life—Its phantoms—Its end in national and individual deterioration—My guide explains the causes of its failure, because contrary to Nature; and congratulates me on having preferred the spiritual Life.

A LITTLE yet in the blest beams of morn
Let me 'mid birds and flowers my tale delay;
A little yet defer the destined scorn
Of wasted days, lone nights, and steps astray,
Earth's wrong, life's heavy burden; all too soon
Must we lament; rejoice we while we may.
No Siren sang, yet Siren-like the tune
Sounded within my brain; and one bright star
Led up the dew-pranked morn of pleasant June.
On the green lawn, from Asian sands how far
By manhood's slumbers pressed! a child I slept
In the visioned sleep where dreams as waking are;
Then seemed I rose, and through the garden stept
Where with white-flowering myrtle pleshed, the rose
A fenceful order 'long the pathway kept.

And as the dream-bound mind its vision knows
Yet how it knows enquires not, ware I was
Of the strange show which was my childhood's close,
That to new birth th' imperfect life might pass;
So near my walk a fluttering sound I heard
As of wings tangled in th' embranching mass,
Seeking deliverance: then I turned where stirred
The leaves, and pinioned 'mid their sprays I saw,
But struggling to get free, a wondrous bird.
Ruffled his painted plumes; with beak and claw
He strove, but nought availed from the strong snare
Of gilded wire his prisoned strength to draw.
Pitying, I sought the noose with helpful care
T' unloose, and set the feathered captive free,
But could not, so perplexed the meshes were.
Sudden a voice, "In vain thou striv'st with me,"
Thus close and clear it rang; "My name is Love;
Mine is thy heart; submit to my decree."
Starting I woke. "No further need to prove
The vision's truth," thus said my guide, who now
Beside me stood; "even here heaven's courses move
Back to their starting-point; the waters flow
Onward, then ebbing their first line retrace;
Nor aught its being's limits may outgrow.
Follow me now, nor fear; the bonds of space
Are broken all: nor danger nor decay
In the vision world for thee, for me, have place."
This said, his hand on mine he laid; the way
Led up a green hill-crest and margined heath;
And wide before us spread the Southern day,
Where a broad river 'midst the plain beneath
In silvery patches shone 'twixt roof and spire
Of a great City, that girt as with the wreath
Of a world's empire either bank; and higher
Spread on the farther slopes: a smoke-dark cloud,
By day a veil, by night a vault of fire

O'erarched the labyrinth streets, where a vast crowd
Like their own river ceaseless ebbed and flowed,
With eager steps, and faces downward bowed.
Dust-soiled they thronged along the pavement road,
Nor raised their eyes to the far sky that ever
Stainless above that smoke-soiled canopy glowed,
But they like circling lines that pass and quiver
Traced on a downward stream, in hurrying press
Eager renewed their purposeless endeavour.
And still from out that brick-piled wilderness
Flashed forth new shapes, new wonders, as the old
Faded; and greater still was given for less;
While midmost high o'erhead in tarnished gold,
Unheeded it by all, in proud neglect
A Cross of times outworn the story told.
"This the great heart of the great Power, bedecked
With earth's chief gems, with earth's own circle crowned,
Thou knowest;"—thus spoke my guide nor stayed t' expect
My answer; "here th' illusive goods abound
That men for substance take; here most the spell
Of the old sorceress works its wildering round."
Then looked I on that crowd innumerable
Of eager faces; careworn each and pale
Went hastening on his way; yet none could tell
Whither his course or why, nor might avail
Or voice or warning hand their race to stay:
But as light leaves swept by the Autumn gale
Onward they whirled; a standard's broad display
Fluttered before them by thin breezes spread,
Of flimsiest gauze, with spangles broidered gay.
And on its flickering folds were letters read
That changed from hour to hour in some new word
Of blown self-praise, so was the vision led.
And where it passed the murky air was stirred

With shouts of joy and triumph, mixed with sighs
As for lost things, in dissonant contrast heard.
For some of progress sung and victories
By science gained; and some bewailed their day
Joyless and dark, by others held in prize.
While dense as luminous insects in their play
That swarm by evening rice-paths, glittering things
Flew round their heads, or perched beside their way,
Void of all substance,—fond imaginings,
Science, light, freedom, progress, and the boast
Of that which man to one mean level brings.
So guided, so accompanied was that host
Of young and old, women and men conjoined,
Where reverence all of sex and age was lost.
With open eyes staring they went, yet blind
To aught but the vain gauds that moved before,
And sought, yet paused not what they sought to find.
Then as I looked I saw that evermore
Hour after hour the brightness of each face
Faded, as fades a flower when smit the core
With blight; and from each limb fell off the grace
Of natural life, and dwarfed the stature grew;
Till of that pomp self-vaunted in short space
Was nothing left; and all that jubilant crew,
Like yearling plants levelled by wintry showers,
Wasted, and in cold mists were hid from view.
"So let them pass," thus spoke my guide; "the powers
Of Nature, the hid springs of weal and woe
Stored in her depths, the prodigal births, the flowers
Of balm or bale; the fruits that life bestow
Or quench, the seasons' wheel, the welcomed Spring,
The populous Summer, Winter's burial snow,
All these, obeyed, man to fulfilment bring,
But thwarted, crush, mocking the vain command
That their set purport from its use would wring.
Not absolute lord of nature man was planned,

"But by obedience to th' unchanging laws
That bind him in his proper place to stand.
But these, as the thwart gleam which treacherous draws
Night's insect follies to their doom, the glare
Of vain conceit, oil-fed by self-applause,
Onward and downward draws; nor part nor share
Of earth's true kingdom, joy, strength, beauty, aught
That makes life lovely as day's light the air
Is theirs; so let them pass from naught to naught:
Till rolled through lower circles, they regain
The conscious being, to better wisdom brought.
But thou rejoice, whom from the ill-starred train
Of such I sundered, when thy vagrant heart
With mine I bound, enfranchised in Love's chain.
So let them pass; hold thou the nobler part
Chosen in thy boyhood's hours, when first thy ear
Approved the voice that made thee what thou art.
And many a rose-crowned Summer, many a year
Has o'er that garden passed, and many a bough
Heavy with Autumn hopes, now bare and sere
Mocks the sad gaze of age; yet happier thou
Even in illusion's loss art known, than they
Who earth's false harlot for their queen avow.
From her, from these I kept thee, day by day
Leading thee on, till manhood's perilous prime
Was gone, and bleached youth's auburn locks to grey.
Not in the shows of sense, the toys of time
Is the true life, thy goal; on other ground
Sown is the harvest, reaped in other clime.
But that ill worm whose coil the world around
With a death-zodiac binds, from noblest things
Draws the slow venom of destruction's wound.
And cities, nations, empires, senates, kings
As London fails shall fail; they most who strove
Loveless to reach, borne on Icarian wings,
The perfect bourne, denied to all but Love."

CANTO VI

Vision of London as Capital of the Empire—My birthplace—London in earlier times—Richard II. and the insurgents—The King and the People—Processional triumph of Queen Elizabeth—Her Court: warriors, statesmen, navigators; Shakespeare, Spenser—Difference between that time and the present—My guide shows me other instances of national decline, as Rome, Constantinople, Athens, Florence, Venice, Paris, Thebes, Nineveh—The cause of their decay, through disobedience to the Laws of natural existence and growth.

THE smoke-wove wreaths whose sullen curtains late
Shrouded that city's large magnificence
Were gone; and clear in view rose the proud state
Of the world's empress; rampart none nor fence
Of brick or stone was hers; so firm she stood
In her own might, herself her own defence.
And as the tangled breadth of some great wood
With leafy domes and spires of shade and light
Mottles the plain from some sheer eminence viewed,
Or the pure blackness of a summer night
Scored and cross-fretted by the chequered rows
Of fleecy cloudlets with reticular white,
So the wide plain adown in sure repose
By the calm-gliding stream, that mighty town
Outstretched its populous maze, whence ceaseless rose

Life's blended murmurs; or a thymy down
O'er-buzzed with bustling bees, keen to fulfil
Their common purpose all, and each its own.
O my loved nurse and birthplace! royal still
Even as thou art this day; but worthier showed
As thus I saw thee, London, from the hill
Of boyhood's vision, and th' ignoble crowd
Mechanical spawn of Time's enfeebled eld
Had passed, as from blue skies a marsh-born cloud.
Then as past days redawning there dispelled
Th' unlovely growths of later years, I viewed
Close by the city marge a field that held
What seemed two hosts, so front to front they stood
Diverse yet semblant; horsemen these, each shield
Emblazoned fair; their armour dashed with blood
Their own or others'. Foremost on the field
As to a banquet dight, forth rode a youth
Unarmed, no vizor's masque his face concealed,
Fearless, in highborn grace and boyish truth:
Nor paled his cheek, though near th' opposing band
Gathered, in coarsest garb and mien uncouth;
Rough men of day's rough toil; each horny hand
For weapon grasped its labour's implement,
Pitchfork or pole or mattock from the land.
Hard was their look, as on fierce purpose bent,
Yet sad, as men pressed by some heavy wrong,
That victory's flush with customed shame was blent.
"What seek ye?" thus the boy to that wild throng;
"Our Leader," rung their answer. "Am not I
Leader and King? to whom but me belong
Redress and justice? Take them." The reply,
"God save our King, King Richard," echoed loud;
"Thy liegemen we; o'er us thy sovereignty."
—"The life of nations, kingship, deeds of war,
Or judgment, vigorous serfage, and the soul
To its own purpose steadfast, as the star

"True to the centre of th' encircled pole,
These hast thou seen; yet look again, ere time
Deface the writing of the storied scroll."
I looked, the scene was changed; as fields in prime
Of flowery Spring, so showed the streets, and loud
The merry bells rang out their festal chime.
And in gay dress with shout and song the crowd
Thronged every street, but most the pomp where rode
A maiden Queen, she seemed, of aspect proud
Yet smiling; proud her cream-white charger trode
Midmost the press; behind, a marshalled band
Worthy such sovereign's lead; so forth they yode,[1]
Warriors and statesmen; some from farthest land
Iberian trophies bore, the golden boast
Of far Atlantis' late-surrendered strand;[2]
And Indian gems, and spoils of Libya's coast
Were there displayed; and each with other vied,
Jealous who that high Dame might honour most.
And some to memory known I there espied,
Cecil's pale brow, and wisest Walsingham,
And Sidney's star, and Leicester's peacock pride;
Howard, and venturous Drake, with many a name
Of war, or counsel, or deep policy,
Who the great meed earned of undying fame.
And 'mid the crowd, nor noted yet, was he
Who all mankind outvalued ta'en in one,
Nature's true glass, a world's epitome,—
Shakespeare; and with him joined the minstrel son[3]
Of my own City-nurse and his, the praise
Of Glorian,[4] praised of all; so passed they on
Not to return; and with them passed the days
When England yet was England, and her Queen
English, and both a dazzled world's amaze.
And much I grieved that what so fair had been

[1] Went. [2] The Americas. [3] Edmund Spenser.
[4] Poetical name for Elizabeth.

Should now so foul appear; and the tall tree
For withered bareness change its earlier green.
Then said my guide and master, "This to see
That thou hast seen, to few is given; yet know
Not new nor strange the visioned destiny.
Others from loftiest heights have fallen as low
Or lower; so the numbing streams of death
Through various channels from one fountain flow."
He spoke, and pointed to the plain beneath,
Now boundless grown, and fronting due the sight
Where yet we stood 'mid yellow furze and heath.
There rose, a phantom scene, Rome's imaged might;
And from the seven-fold nest to farthest bounds
Of earth, th' all-conquering eagle winged its flight;
To clerkly dotage next and ruinous mounds
Shrunk and dishonoured; such the doom of sway
That in excess the natural use confounds.
O piteous sight of unsurmised decay!
O solitude of her that populous sate!
Nor deemed her flower could fade, decline her day.
And there Byzantium mourned her purple state,
Jewel-clasp of two Empires, East and West,
Now in chained foulness worse than desolate.
There too I saw, by the like doom oppressed,
Lesser but lovelier forms; Minerva's pride
With olive crowned and violet; erst confessed
Of arts and learning queen; there by the side
Of a shrunk Arno mourned the city known
Etruria's Athens; there sad Adria's bride;
And the old Bourbons' mud-bespattered throne
Where boastful Paris flaunts her worst disgrace,
As erst in despot splendour matched of none.
All these and more besides were there in place,
With hundred-gated Thebes, and Nimrod's pride,
And Ninus' sculptured piles which years deface.
Heart-sore, "And is this all?" I weeping cried,

"To this must nations come? no better hope?
But faint decay and ruin multiplied?"
"Not Nature's crime but theirs; the proper scope,"
Answered my guide, "of all things to increase
Is framed; not death but life heaven's star-bright cope
Showers down on men and cities, nor can cease
From ever-working growth; but freely still
Large and more large renews her primal lease.
But the thwart power perverse that joys in ill
Through praise dishonour brings, through growth decay,
Rulers and ruled by turns misguiding; till
They fall, as these have fallen of elder day.
O ye unwise! who from th' unerring line
By Nature traced, in self-planned courses stray.
On its own rocks 'neath its own sky the pine
Puts forth its resinous scent; nor seeks to change
Its natal slopes the grape-maturing vine.
Plant, bird, beast, insect, each maintains the range
Of its own personal birthplace; food nor soil
They vary, nor their self from self estrange.
But ye with arrogant vaunt, and the fond toil
Of shallow lore would fain the laws reverse
Of birth, and Nature's garden fair despoil
Of flower, and flower-born fruit, with skill perverse
Life's deep foundations boastful to remove;
Till sink your sand-built towers, smit by the curse
Of slighted Nature and avenging Love."

CANTO VII

The vision of Ruins, and beyond it a shining City, the abode of true patriots—We journey to it—The City is four-square, with a Northern and an Eastern gate—Numa, guardian of the Northern gate—The guardian of the Eastern gate—No entrance to West or South—The guardian of the Northern gate invites me to enter—I enquire of my Guide the meaning of these things—He explains—Spiritual affinity between Rome and London; also between myself and those of the Eastern gate, which represents Asia, as the Northern gate, Europe—Sterility of the West or America, from the want of true nobility of soul and aim—Sterility of Africa, and the Tropics generally (figured by the South gate), arising from the natural inferiority of the inhabitants—Limits of patriotic greatness—Japan on the East—Gibraltar on the West—The glory of the City.

As who from some high cliff the beach below
  Bestrewed with splintered wrecks beholds at morn,
Where heaved in glossy calm the waters flow
That late such mischief wrought, now as in scorn
  Smiling; while bare and shivering on the sands
Cowers some scarce-rescued wretch of all forlorn;
So from the gorse-grown hill those visioned lands
  Showed to my gaze, where in sad prospect lay,
Ruins of time, rent altars, scattered brands.
But these beyond, on the far marge away
  Shone a fair city's whiteness, as the star

When heavy clouds oppress the dying day,
Gleams in keen silver o'er the murky bar
From South to North outstretched, the girded zone
Of night, swift hastening day's delight to mar.
So where all else was gloom that city shone
Upreared in perfect beauty, wall and spire,
'Yond the sad wrecks of empire overthrown.
"To that fair town, loadstone of thy desire
Our steps are bent," thus spoke the gracious voice
That was my guidance; "what thy thoughts desire
Be mine unasked to grant when just the choice;
Nor joys a father more at wisdom shown
By his loved son, than I in thine rejoice.
Here of high deeds the guerdon, here the throne
Of the true kings of men, the destinies
Through toil and death to life's full stature grown.
Therefore unchanged beneath the changeful skies
Their works abide; nor ruinous decay
Nor secret guile their fastness may surprise,
Nor cloud o'ercast the splendours of their day,
Nor autumn sear their summer, nor the shade
Of late remorse their steadfast hope dismay."
Thus having spoke his hand on mine he laid,
Guide to my way; till from that well-known height
Descending, 'mid the plain our path was made.
'Mid various talk that seems not here to write,
To those high towers we passed, the portioned close
Of wise assurance and well-ordered might.
On deep foundations reared the walls arose
Polished and rock-like firm, that might defy
Worst wrongs of gnawing time, or sudden foes.
Four-square in measured strength they faced the sky;
And on two sides, to North and East, a gate
Showed guarded entrance to the passers by.
At either portal, throned in grave estate
Sceptred and crowned, unbid by whom the door

Might ope to none, a royal porter sate.
Unlike in aspect diverse robes they wore;
Grey-browed the first[1] o'er thoughtful eyes; his dress
Round its white folds a purple margent bore;
Bent was his form, as one whom years oppress:
And at his side in youthful beauty bare
Stood sweet Egeria's fount-born loveliness.
But by the gate that fronts the Eastern stair
Sat one nor young nor old, in manly show,
With smiling face, and brow unseamed by care.
I saw and wondered much; then turned to go
Westward; but door or entrance there was none,
But a blank wall, denied to friend or foe.
Last where the towers in Southern sunlight shone
With like event I strayed; then took my way
Back to the Northern gate, the circuit done.
"O thou who wandering long by much delay
Hast reached the sacred mount, where the late flower
Of life some ripened fruit may yet display,
Here rest, for here is rest, the while the hour
Of adverse influence blots earth's skies, to know
Of steadfast purpose wed with truth the dower."
Such welcome, made in gentle words and slow
Where at the gate I stood, rejoiced my ear
From him who second reigned by Tiber's flow.
"Lord of my life, whose love has brought me here
Nor vainly brought," I said, "brother and guide,
Present in whom the past, the distant near,
Tell me why foremost from the Northern side
This greeting given? who guards the Eastern door?
And why from West and South access denied?"
Answered my guide, half chiding, "What before
I told thee call to mind, nor longer be
As one who having, keeps unused his store,—
How in the star-traced courses the decree

[1] Numa.

"Is writ that binds the sons of earth in one,
So in their birthright climes and skies agree.
Many the heirs of Numa's Rome; but none
Chiefer than thy own birthplace, her the nurse
Of thy first childhood by her Thames begun.
Thy heritage this from out the universe;
Yet not forbid thy range the names untraced
In Europe's page, untuned to Europe's verse;
As his who thrones by th' Eastern portal placed,
Silent as yet to thee; but soon his voice
Shall fresh and firm upbuild what years defaced,
As erst Amphion's song; till wisdom's choice
'Twixt these and those may doubtful hang, nor know
If more with these to mourn, with those rejoice.
Not thus th' unstable West, in barren flow
As its own vexed Atlantic's breast, where all
Purposeless the dark waters pass and go,
With lawless winds in hourly rise and fall.
These worth nor honour rules, but common greed
Not as of men, but cattle from the stall;
Each for himself; nor reverend age, nor meed
Of honoured birth, nor courtesy that tends
On gentle minds, nor care of generous deed
Is theirs; but shallow strivings, shallow ends,
Youth joyless, manhood loveless, life a dream
That fame records not, past, nor praise attends.
Vanity! Such the fountain, such the stream;
From withering what the rootless plant can save?
Or what the promise of lost youth redeem?
O had he known that vaunted gift who gave,
A second world, what ills his gift should bear
To him, to all,—unploughed the Western wave
Had kept the secret of its shores, and ne'er
Not to redress but ruin, to the New
Had the Old lent an ill-apportioned share.
O foolish men, the ancient poise and true

"Of ordered measure cast aside, to weigh
Unequal weights in self-forged scales untrue!
Nor yet where Southward flames the zodiac day
Is aught of memory worth the groves among
Where dusky nations dusky lords obey.
Small wisdom theirs or strength, nor much of wrong
They heed, or right maintain; recorded praise
Nor blame to such in manhood's right belong.
Turn thee from these, nor care what later days
May haply garner from a thriftless soil,
Nor seek the fruit where yet the flower delays.
This know; from where Cathay to duteous toil
Sends forth her long-haired children, and the sun
First resting finds from the wide sea's turmoil,
To where on Calpe's [1] heights, his journey done,
He stays a late farewell, the bounds assigned
Are these to manhood's worth, since man begun.
Nor think the priceless gems of praise to find
In South or West new-ventured, or the show
Of popular rule, and freedom ill-defined."
Thus while he spoke a splendour as the glow
Of the great day-star's worshipped orb, that fires
To burnished gold the upland's crested snow,
Lit with pure flames the ridgy roofs and spires
In mazy lines, till all that city shone
As crystal, netted o'er with gilded wires.
O of true virtue and great deeds the throne!
O just reward of those who justly strove!
Joyous the gates I entered, o'er me thrown
The imperial mantle of abiding Love.

[1] Gibraltar.

CANTO VIII

My delight on entering the City; which contains the noblest of men—I traverse the Northern quarter, where are the great men of Greece, Rome, Italy, Holland, Russia, England, Venice, and the Mediterranean region; and am admitted to their fellowship—I meet Agis, King of Sparta—We converse—He relates his attempt to regenerate Sparta: its failure, and his death—My guide consoles him: his triumph—I enter the Eastern region, laid out as a garden, and am welcomed by the Guardian thereof.

THE joy, the wonder, all that thrills the breast
Almost to pain, when erst from far the foot
Measuring its road, halts on the seven-fold crest
Of the world's Queen; awhile in rapture mute
The traveller stands, then "Rome!" exclaims, and still
Repeats, as fearful of the truth's dispute;
Nor may his eyes of gazing take their fill,
Where grey with memories rise the walls that tell
Of giant rule, and earth-encircling will:
Such was my joy when by th' associate spell
Of Love upheld, my steps the threshold passed
An hour to pace that honoured citadel.
The deeds that time and time's own heavens outlast,
The thoughts that quenchless burn when quenched the stars,

The spoken words, mightier than tempest blast,
The works of laurelled peace, the well-fought wars,
The words that man for more than man proclaim,
The thoughts of light, as morning's radiant bars,
And they the sons of greatness, lords of fame,
Those words who boldly spoke, those deeds who wrought,
Not in their own but in their country's name;
Who greatly dared to think, and gave their thought
Substance in art, nor backward turned, but deemed
The higher life by the lower cheaply bought,
Were here, on earth by death from death redeemed,
Robed in that city's shadowless light, the while
Each starlike in his proper splendour beamed.
O of our kind the glory! in what style
Can I the jewels of your high praise enchase,
To which all bright is dull, all precious vile?
From street to street I ventured with slow pace
As one who finds him 'mid a nobler band
Than wont, and in mere shame casts down his face.
For all that Greece, or Rome, or the fair land
Daughter of each, divinest Italy,
Have given to fame, I here in presence scanned.
And joined with these the chiefs whose purpose high,
Of self forgetful, laboured still to rear
Through toil and pain their birthland's majesty,
By Tiber's yellow stream, or Arno clear,
Or the crag-margined shores where burst and flow
Aegaea's sparkling tides, or marshes drear
Of Holland, Moscow's fire-illumined snow,
Green England's daisied meads, the marble walls
Of Venice, Syria's rock-reflected glow,—
From death-strewn fields to history known, from halls
Of council, warriors, statesmen, whose firm mind
Nor popular greed infects, nor fear appals,
All doubt, all wavering purpose left behind,—

I passed amid these mighty ones; to me
Unworthy was such worthiness assigned.
As one to whom some wizard hand the key
Of a great wealth has given, from room to room
Strays on 'mid gold and heaped-up jewelry,
Master of all, and through the caverned gloom
Sees further heaps, and thinks, "The antique earth
For me on these has closed her hoardful womb;"
Then to those riches turns again, in mirth
Laughing aloud, and drunk with childish pleasure,
Nor fears decay, nor heeds of other worth;—
Even so was I, girt by the new-found treasure
Of will and wisdom, from the founts of time
Poured forth around me there, nor stint nor measure.
So on we fared, our talk of deeds which climb
Fame's highest heights, of deaths that life complete,
Not conquer, the ripe first-fruits of earth's prime;
Till at a corner of the shining street
That midway cleft the town, I saw where sate,
Fair as the sky where night and morning meet,
In most translucent calm, a form sedate
But sad, and sad the glories of his brow,
Though as a conqueror crowned in kingly state.
A lustre half-eclipsed, a smothered glow,
A beauty dimmed by pain; that all my heart
In pitying love went forth his truth to know.
But ere I spoke, he questioned: "Who thou art
Tell me, and whence thy path, and who thy guide,
That mortal claim'st among th' immortals part?"
"Of little note my name, nor aught beside
Worthy recount is mine; who leads me knows
Alike my whence and wherefore," I replied:
"Nor needs my guide declare; th' assured repose
Of this firm city, an untroubled lake,
Reflects each light in upper heaven that shows.
But who art thou thus lone? my eye-balls ache

"With gazing on thy beauty, and my soul
Faints in compassionate longing for thy sake."
"A purpose unfulfilled was mine, a goal
Unreached," he answered, "Sparta's heir and king,
The lines of shame t' erase from Sparta's scroll
I strove, and back the honoured days to bring
Of old Lycurgus, and the blighted wreath
Inweave with garlands of a better Spring.
As he who with much toil the stifled breath
Of his drowned child would fain recall, in vain
I wrought, nor knew that death but leads to death,—
Once gone, for ever gone." Like one with pain
Oppressed, awhile he ceased; then raised his face
And smiled. "And were my hour renewed, again
Would I adventure, though the pathway led
But where it ended then." He bared his neck
Black with the cruel noose. "Thou seest," he said,
"Sparta's reward, no more; nor much I reck
My doom; nor, pilot of th' ancestral state,
Though guiltless of her loss, survive the wreck."
"Agis," then spoke my guide, "unequal fate
Conquered thy hopes, not thee; the nobler lot
Once chosen, abides thy portion; factious hate
Has but itself o'ermastered; unforgot
Sparta survives in thee, the holiest word
On the muster-roll of fame, that numbers not
Greater than those who death nor shame have feared
Even from their country, for that country's good,
And to their own her welfare aye preferred.
Swift fades all human growth unless with blood
Watered betimes its roots; life's loftiest towers
In death's foundations aye have firmest stood."
As some fair field late drenched in wintry showers
By Spring's returning sun caressed, again
Glitters in emerald spikes and varnished flowers,
So at these words the gloom of anxious pain

Passed from that regal brow, in joy serene
Assured he had not striven nor died in vain.
Then on we passed, to where a meadow green
Starred with bright flowers to sight disclosed a throng
Of other aspect; some the groves between
Paced in glad converse linked, and some with song
Made the air tuneful; some in restful ease
Sat or reclined the grass-edged streams along.
Less fair than those behind us left were these,
Yet not less noble showed, but calmer shone
Their light, as moonshine over silent seas.
Self-perfect shapes, each in himself a throne
Of firm content and absolute victory,
A lord of nations each, and each alone.
A purer air was theirs, a sunnier sky
Through the far Eastern portals issuing there
Whence light and life have course continually.
"Thrice-happy spirits, to whom this garden fair
Is given, your wages these: O! would that fate
Past life, past death, with you might mete my share."
Such thought was mine, when from the Eastern gate
Th' unspoken answer came, that silent passed
Through sense and heart, with joy untried elate.
"Well hast thou chosen; here be the anchor cast
Of thy long sail," so spoke my guide, "thy race
With these is numbered, these thy peers at last.
Here rest; awhile among them be thy place,
Thy sojourn here, so will the lords above,
With these thy brethren, circled in th' embrace
Foretaste and pledge assigned of deathless Love."

CANTO IX

Beauty of the Eastern garden, the resting-place of the Eastern patriots and heroes—I fall into an enchanted sleep, and in dream am transported to Japan: description of Japan—Vision of the Sun-origin of the Japanese nation, and the connection between the two—Temno, the first Emperor—His semblance, as the Guardian of Japan—He announces himself to me; and explains the excellence of the first Age of Japan—Its simplicity and conformity with Nature—Ill effects of the introduction from China of Buddhism, and of luxury and pomp—Civil wars, and succeeding torpor under the usurping nobles—Foreign attack—Restoration of the Empire—Exhortation to Japan to stand fast on her original and native ways—An extasy—End of the First or Introductory Pageant.

SATIATE with pleasure through that garden wide
I strayed by copse and streamlet, the sweet hour
Content t' enjoy, careless of all beside.
Whate'er may loveliest be of plant or flower,
Whate'er of beauty may the varied scene
Present in open lawn or arching bower;
Full brooks of mirrored silver, marged with green,
Blossoms of every hue the summer West
At sunset wears the golden isles between,
In one were gathered there; not farthest quest
Of Ocean's hid retreats, nor fairy glades

In moonlight masked, that wondrous tales attest,
Nor the cool valleys by Pierian maids
Trodden, nor Syria's glens, nor Enna's plain,
Nor Circe's haunts, nor Eden's vanished shades,
Might in compare that garden's vaunt attain;
Even Nature's self with Nature to adorn
Aught else in rival guise, might strive in vain.
Nor ever night was there, nor eve, but morn
In dewy sparklings radiant, that with Spring
Contended which should most these bowers adorn.
And Time was there, but Love had clipped his wing
And reft his scythe, lest to that happy ground
His captious malice aught of wrong should bring,
Till the great hour predoomed, the ultimate bound
Of time and time's creation, when complete
The secular year fulfils its destined round.
Then as I wandered on with careless feet
From lawn to glade, from glade to lawn, the dell
With a strange stillness of enchantment sweet
Closed me around, till on my sense there fell
Deep slumber, where a pine's wide boughs outspread
Shadowed a bank of moss-wove asphodel.
I slept, and seemed, but how I know not, led
Where on an island coast a dark blue sea
Broke in white waves unceasing; overhead
With flakes of sulphurous smoke heaven's canopy
Was streaked; but all beyond, green plains and hills
Were netted o'er with dense embroidery
Of every growth that from earth's store distils
Colour, and scent, and sweetness; shone between
Wide-spreading lakes, swift torrents, silver rills.
No fairer land Idalia's goddess queen [1]
Claimed for her own; yet from the crested snows
Fire-mingled horror frowned in sternest mien.

[1] Venus.

All these I saw, nor marvelled; sleep bestows
Such calm 'mid strangest phantasm, that the mind
As fore-aware, nor fear nor wonder knows.
Then, where it seemed I lay, a vehement wind
Intense with torrent brightness, as a stream
Of whitest light that makes the eyeballs blind,
Burst forth and wrapped me round; till in my dream
Swept upwards 'mid the central fire I stood
That in their courses guides the sevenfold team
Of borrowed light and warmth each day renewed,
And other orbs unreckoned; these among
Our little world its moon-dogged way pursued.
But from above what seemed a bridge was flung
O'er the abyss to where, third of the seven,
A slanted ball our sea-girt planet hung.
As o'er some cliff by primal earthquakes riven
The workman's skill a binding length of chain
May throw, so this o'erarched the void of heaven,
And to that island 'mid th' involving main
Where erst I stood, the farther end was bound;
Then to the fiery centre turned again.
Nor form distinct was there, nor act, nor sound,
But from the inmost depths outstretched the hand
That makes and mars whatever lives on ground.
And as the flickering lights that net the sand
Seen through clear shallow waters, when the day
Looks down from balanced noon o'er sea and land,
With intertangling shapes instinct the ray
Traced varying pictures there, now seen, now gone
Where mirror-like earth's mottled surface lay,
Of trees, and beasts, and birds, and men; each one
A moment given to view, then hid from sight
By other shapes successive o'er it drawn.
Then as a sudden star that 'midst the light
Of the broad new-risen morn appears, nor less
Glitters distinct in the dawn-silvered height,

Stood forth a warrior form,[1] in stateliness
A visible god, parent of gods and kings,
With the sun's glories girt as with a dress.
And o'er his crested head with plumy wings
Hovered a dragon-bird; and keen his look
Was sent before, gazing on far-off things
Where star-like in the tremulous distance shook
The destiny of Japan, the island gem
Jealously set in Ocean's farthest nook;
Of Asia's sea-dipped robe the flowery hem,
Of noblest tissue wove, yet firm t' outlast
The gold and iron of Rome's own diadem;
Heir of the primal sun, from dateless past
To dateless future, Empire's singular throne,
In Nature's central strength founded and fast.
Then as I looked, with gentler lustre shone
That hero-shape, beckoning me where I stood
With gracious speech of welcome; "Not unknown
To thee my name, my lineage, unsubdued
By all-subduing Time and Change, and aye
Like Spring-tide flowers from age to age renewed."
He spoke, and pointed where beneath us lay
In greenest light, chequered with dusky shade
The gathered isles that Temno's throne obey.
Then thus; "Child of antipodal earth, conveyed
By Love to Love's domain, attend and learn
The truth in fiction's visioned scene conveyed.
So through the time-wove veils mayst thou discern
Whence kindled the pure flame through secular years
Unquenched, through ages yet unquenched to burn.
No demon-haunted fanes, no dotard fears
Were once Japan's; no altar-stone, no shrine
Was dark with victims' blood, or wet with tears.
No statecraft yet had traced the sundering line
'Twixt man and man, rulers and ruled, nor yet

[1] Temno.

" Disparted human life from life divine.
Nor simple truth lay tangled in the net
Of multiple science; none the charge belied
Of herited toil; nor might the lord forget
His vassal's sunborn kinship; side by side
Palace and cottage rose; the chieftain's hold
To the serf's hut protecting strength supplied.
This was; till from the West upgathering rolled
A vapour dense with monstrous images
Of palace-courts, temples, and gods of gold,
And priestly hopes and terrors, the disease
Of mind o'erstrained to madness, such as throng
The hermit's cave, till mockery-girt he sees
Angels or demons in illusion strong,
Like herded clouds by the Autumn tempest chased
Flight after flight the evening skies along:
And luxury's pomp and wealth-bred pride effaced
The simpler life, as smirched a picture rare
Of ancient skill by some coarse hand defaced;
And bigot zeal and tyrannous wrong were there,
And war begetting war, and rival rage,
And the foul things that bred and nurtured are
Of time's corruption; till th' exhausted age
Lapped in tricennial slumber pulseless lay,
And o'er it custom closed her iron cage.
Till waked by rude assault, we stand at bay
'Gainst foes without, 'gainst our own selves within,
And in our late revived our earlier day.
So with new youth instinct her spotted skin
The serpent casts, nor heeds the pulsing throes,
Intent the renovated life to win.
My own heroic country! he who knows
Loves thee; who loves, with jealous dread surveys
Alike misleading friends and pirate foes.
From the false outer-lure avert thy gaze;
In thy own self and Nature's mirror look

"For the glad image of imperial days.
Nor foreign law, nor lore, nor art, nor book
Thou need'st; nor with the foolish be thou found
Who glass for gems, tinsel for gold mistook."
Thus while he spoke the light that clothed him round
From heaven's ancestral orb, sent forth a ray
That dream to sense transformed; and on the ground
Where late I slept, wakeful again I lay:
With flowers the grass was rife, with birds the grove;
And at my side the guardian of my way,
Shone, the bright reflex of transforming Love.

CANTO X

We leave the Glorious City and Garden, and go Eastwards by a narrow path in a dismal wood, whence comes a sound of moaning and lamentation—I ask an explanation, and am answered that this is the region allotted to those who have wasted their life without worthy aims or deeds; the commonplace; the selfish: Also of those utterly worthless and depraved by nature, vicious and cruel from their birth; examples are named to me—All these forfeit their personality, and return to the general mass of existence, as material out of which new individualities may arise—I see them melting and fused into indistinct substance—They have no individual future, nor personal link to a second life—I am downcast at the sight, but my Guide rouses me to go onwards; we shall soon have passed the region of the Second Death—This is a mystery revealed to few.

From the fair haven where the joys of shore
  Are with sea-toil at quits, half-willed the crew
On further voyage bound, unloose once more
The bark long beached in calm; the sails anew
  With song and shout unfolding to the breeze
Forward they fare, till from their lessening view
Are gone the quays and houses, heights and trees,
  The dear familiar landmarks, bartered ill
For breadth of hazy skies and shifting seas.
Now back they strain their view, now round them, till

Dim grow their eyes with tears, nor aught they find
Present, the depths of memory's void to fill:
So from the City of Praise, the close assigned
To noblest deeds, the crown of all delight
Round victor brows by Love victorious twined,
Not now by choice, but by th' o'ermastering might
Of Fate's decree, that willed my steps to tread
Each maze of circling life, each difficult height,
With slow submissive feet and downcast head,
Silent, nor conscious all, I passed the door
Whence Eastward through the land the pathway led,
With quickset thorn and bramble matted o'er;
Rugged the ground and dry; large stones between
Strewn in loose sand vexed the tired footstep sore.
Nor lightsome flower was there, nor pleasant green,
But speckled growths and hemlock's sullen leaf
'Mid sapless trunks and blighted boughs were seen;
Boughs where no sweet bird sang, but sounds of grief
With moanings mixed and cries of vain lament
That sought but found not to its woes relief,
Filled that sad wood, and followed where we went,
A tedious way, 'mid heavy vapours cast
O'er path and copse, a dank infolding tent.
Silent and slow 'mid mist and gloom we passed,
And still the moaning voices wailed around
As wails 'mid dying woods the wintry blast.
And lead-like weighed the lifeless air, that sound
Stirred not, across my brows, and in thick sand
Clogged, my tired steps no certain footing found.
So fares 'mid Arctic floes some shipwrecked band
Frost-doomed to slumbrous death, where the chill sea
Frets the black edges of an ice-girt strand.
"Master," at last I said, "what strange decree
Of Fate, or vengeful guerdon of past crime,
Or Chance untoward, if Chance indeed there be,
Has desolate made of light and life the clime?

"And whence these wailing sounds of grief unseen
Like infant ghosts that mourn their ravished prime?"
"Not Chance," he answered thus, "nor the blind Fate
Fabled of some, o'er these have sway; no power
Is theirs aught here to ruin or create.
But as from stalk the bud, from bud the flower
In certain sequence springs, till last the fruit
Mellows in ripeness to the seasoned hour,
So all thou here behold'st in earth has root,
Thence to fulfilment brought, nor less nor more
Than in its cause ordained and certain suit.[1]
The high rewards of patriot toil, the store
Of joys won by endurance, the fair sheaves
Of harvest sown on Nature's kindliest shore,
These hast thou seen; nor wonder much if grieves
Thy spirit to change for shade the blessed light,
And withered boughs for springtide's golden leaves.
For here the doom of those who shunned the fight
In craven sloth, nor ranged them with the bands
Of good or ill, rolled round from day to night,
Purposeless, useless, shrivelled hearts and hands,
To selfish pleasures, selfish cares consigned,
The cankered weeds of life's unfruitful sands.
They too whom yet unborn a reprobate mind
Fashioned to ill, in foulness bred, their hours
Numbered by deeds of shame, a bestial kind.
Th' unnatured mime,[2] who, crowned with poison flowers,
Trophied his own disgrace, twice matricide,
By Baiae's shore, and Rome's fire-wasted towers;
And Emesa's painted god,[3] and who beside
Verona's courts or, Padua,[4] thine with shame
And blood besmirched, and she the murd'ress bride[5]
Of Kirkfield's blackened walls, and more whose name
Is writ in time's worst scroll; and with them blent

[1] Consequence. [2] Nero. [3] Elagabalus.
[4] Ezzelino d'Este: Galeazzo Visconti. [5] Mary of Scotland.

" Despots and eunuchs, Asia's secular shame.
All these inglorious here sad discontent
Holds prisoners; they 'mid thorns and twilight lone
Lost life, lost love, lost joys, lost all, lament.
Nor sign nor memory theirs; form, that each one
From each beside divides, a separate whole
Or man or less than man, from these is gone:—
Unsexed, unshaped, unconscienced, till the scroll
Of heaven-writ time unfolding mark the change
That shapes to self the yet unpersoned soul."
No more he said, but pointed to the range
Of that dense girding wood; I looked and saw,
Or seemed to see, so vague the sight, so strange,
Uncertain things like snow-flakes when the thaw
Of Spring's first venture has their links unstrung,
That fused in shapeless masses earthward drew.
So downward weighed in ragged wreaths that clung
To the bare boughs, or scattered here and there,
Drifted by unseen gusts at random flung,
Those dregs of ruined manhood; but the air
With inarticulate hiss of scoff and scorn
And moanings of a woe beyond despair
Was thick; a starless night divorced from morn,
A Springless winter, where th' untimely germ
Hard locked in frost and darkness rots unborn;
A mouldering layer, where crawls and feeds the worm
Of death in death, till from the general heap
New powers assigned may better lives inform.
But not themselves they raise them from the sleep
That being's lines effaced, nor theirs the due
Of years renewed who nothing sowed nor reap.
To their first life, first hope, first task untrue
No second chance is theirs, no conscious day
Waits them through secular courses dawned anew.
Name, memory, self, their all has passed away,
As clouds a moment touched by sunset's beam

Fade in the rain-dimmed twilight's common grey.
So on we went; and still that evil gleam
Clung to the woods around, and sadly shrilled
The inarticulate wail; or truth, or dream,
Or both, I scarce could tell, such sadness filled
My heart at thought of that sad ruin, the tomb
Of squandered life, and being unfulfilled.
"Rouse thee," then thus my guide, "nor make to gloom
Profitless way; what here thou seest of dread
Is but the darkness of Life's fashioning womb.
Leave to their shame the shamed, to death the dead.
Onward; the road is long, and far the goal,
And brief the hour, and steep the path we tread."
As wine to quivering lips when faints the soul
From out th' o'er-laboured limbs, so was thy word
To me, my guide, my hope, my heart's control.
"Look up," thus he continued; "great th' award
Well earned by little pain, sweet the repose;
On these thy thoughts be fixed, in these upstored.
And see; even now the tangled forest shows
Less dense; and thinlier wove the thorny screen,[1]
And fresh the wind from off the outland blows
Scattering the phantom haze; a kindlier green
Mottles the dusky ground; and lightsome day
Sunders with silvery streaks the cloud-wove screen.[1]
While the sad wails that long have dogged our way
Now faint and fainter come, till heard no more,
Like far-off funeral notes when borne away
Seaward from listeners on a spell-girt shore:
And part thou understand'st, and part the veil
Of earthly grossness blurs and darkens o'er.
To listening ears, to thine, is told my tale;
To seeing eyes revealed, not theirs who rove
Self-blinded, self-betrayed; nor guides avail
When quenched the lamp, unclasped the hand of Love."

[1] *Sic* MSS.

CANTO XI

We are in an empty plain, sloping up towards a mountain range—My guide explains that what we have thus far passed was the Intermediate State assigned to the noblest, and, next, that to the basest lives—But many regions and conditions remain, corresponding to other degrees and pursuits of life—He urges advance—We begin to climb the mountain, but the path breaks off—My guide ascribes this to some malignant power—Above the precipice appears a man's hand, and six other mystical symbols, the last a fair youth, whom my guide speaks of mysteriously as Eros or Anteros—The mystery can only be declared, and entrance given by the presiding Power.

Now on we fared by open ground, but strewed
With tumbled blocks, and specked with tarns that shone
Silver, 'mid blackening moss and granite rude;
Grey overhead the heavens, and distant grown
To limitless height removed; and faint afar
Like a vast wall uprose a mountain zone.
Yet to our onward march th' horizon bar
No nearer grew; nor day was there nor night,
Nor sky-throned sun, nor roving moon nor star
Told of time-chronicled change; behind in sight
Lay a black streak the woodland, and before
Wide stretched the desolate plain to left and right.
As sleeps a play-tired child his pastime o'er,

So slept th' encircling air; no motion stirred
The balanced reed, and grassy plumelet hoar.
Nor hum of insect flight, nor chirp of bird
Nor aught that lived was there; no landmark told
Of measured space, or path or goal averred.
By doubt perplexed, yet fearful lest too bold
In question found, I turned my guide to ask
Whence the numb stillness, what the desolate wold.
Not easier may the scribe his oft-conned task
Traced by himself peruse, than he my need
For whom nor thought had veil nor purport mask.
Then thus; "Th' abode of joys to those decreed
Who of earth's part the noblest chose and best,
The garnered harvest of life's golden seed,
Hast thou beheld, nor less the term unblest
Of earth's mere failure, where th' unhonoured dead
Sleep their long sleep by dull oblivion pressed.
By these and those to the hid meaning led
Nor thine, nor wholly mine; but in the scroll
Writ of the Eternal, by th' Eternal read.
Now hear; by other paths than these the goal
Is reached; in other circles traced and twined
Round the high mount the lustral courses roll.
But first th' extremest bounds of old assigned
To earthly time and space, this region drear
Empty and waste, between two worlds confined,
Traversed by few, our steps must pass; nor ere
Can'st thou the heights attain, the entrance gate
Where the great Portress guards the sevenfold sphere;
And in like number ranged thy coming wait
The sorcerer-lords of life, by whom each one
Of praise or blame his portion finds and state.
On then, nor doubt, nor fear; the work begun
Is half achieved; but brief the hour allowed
To thee, to me, and swift the sand-grains run."
As when at day's decline a spreading cloud

Wind-driven, in haste ascends the Western height
And weaves a dying sun's untimely shroud,
The traveller sees his reckoning short, and light
Outwaned before its hour, and hurries on
Lest fail his steps bemazed in blinding night,
'Mid the dark hills where help or shelter none,—
So at that warning voice my loitering tread
Hasted or seemed to haste, all languor gone.
Nor long, the level plain at hand outspread
To broken ridges changed, that ever higher
Rose to the towered-up ranges overhead.
Dark ledges, fringed with many a splintered spire
Of storm-worn rock; and close behind them glowed
Flickering the turmoil of that quenchless fire
Wrapt round Earth's poles, the Northern gods' abode;
And steeper showed the path and narrower still,
And stonier rough the ground our footsteps trode.
Yet all untired we upward clomb, until
We reached where like some Alpine torrent black
Loose rocks confusedly piled streamed down the hill,
Barring all further way, that stony wrack
So wide, so wild was strewed; the searching eye
Questioned in vain, nor found of answering track
Vestige or sign: not Salcombe's cliffs might vie
In steepness with that ruin, nor meets the gaze
From Petra's piled-up rocks more stern reply.
"Whence now th' ascent? who knows? and by what ways
Our further course? and how?" thus spoke my guide
Pausing, as one whom new-risen doubts amaze.
"Master," I said, "not all by thee untried
These realms I deem; how then th' unlooked-for bar
Thwarting thy hope? by whom the way denied?"
And he; "The Power malign from old at war
With Love's well-ordered reign has wrought this wrong,
Haply our purposed task intent to mar.

"Vain malice, by heaven's lords to whom belong
Thy fates, derided, as the mischievous play
Of some rude child the garden flowers among.
Nor at his choice our destined course to stay
By absolute Will ordained; nor the decree
Fate-sealed is his to cancel or delay."
Thus while he spoke 'twas mine with fear to see
The topmost marge above, a shape that seemed
As a man's hand,[1] outstretched in air and free;
And in its grasp a golden circlet gleamed
Fit for a monarch's crown; and wide o'erhead
Now bright now dim a wavering glory streamed.
Then close beside, from that high verge outspread
Through the faint haze like some ethereal fire
Shone a white flower,[2] lip-tinged with crimson red.
A living thing, instinct with strong desire
It bent and beckoned towards me, till my heart
Answered, as voice to voice responsive quire.
Roused me from that sweet trance with sudden smart
A chill, as when through pleasant airs of spring
Unseen a floated iceberg sends its dart.
For close beside that flower uprose a thing[3]
Of form uncertain, veiled as with a shroud
In dazzling gleam and wide out-pinioned wing.
Terrified, "What may this portend?" aloud
I cried; but he, the Master, with stern look,
Finger on lip, my questioning disallowed.
And more than words his silence gave rebuke
With warning mixed and caution, how the hour
Nor vagrant thought nor idle speech might brook.
The outstretched hand, th' o'ershadowing wings, the flower
Yet fringed the height; but pathway none nor stair
Led up from where we stood to that strange tower

[1] Ambition: War and Statesmanship.
[2] Art. [3] Religion.

Of inaccessible rock, the foot's despair;
And grey above the vaporous vault; and cold
Shook the scant grass-tops in the tremulous air.
Then a fourth sign in tortuous length unrolled
Flaunted those three beside, a banner[1] bright
With rainbow hues and writings wrought in gold.
Earth, ocean, changeful day, returning night
Embroidered there were seen, the ways of men,
And courts, and council-halls, and deeds of might.
Much I admired; but ere my curious ken
Had half discoursed these shapes, a doubtful form[2]
Like smoke-wreaths rolled at eve across the fen,
Rose to the marge: the blackness of the storm
Was in its hair; woman's the face, but pale,
With wrinkles seamed, and vexing cares deform.
Unlike, though near, in glittering garb and frail
Even as the gauziest insect things that ply
Their idle dance adown a woodland vale,
A harlot form[3] had place; her wanton eye
Challenged the gazer; in her hand the while
A bell-ringed timbrel tinkled ceaselessly.
But from the rest apart, as who nor guile
Nor force in aid required, a youth[4] there stood
With earnest eyes, and conquest's regal smile.
Loose o'er his breast a scarf more red than blood
Was cast, unveiled the rest, and fair in hue
As Parian stone new washed in crystal flood.
And ever as I looked his stature grew
Taller and yet more tall, and ruddier grew
The scarf, as roseleaves wet with summer dew.
"The choicest gift on earth-born man bestowed,
The direst curse, thou seest; to thee, to all
Chief help chief hindrance on the upward road.

[1] Creative thought in Literature.
[2] Physical Science and its practical applications.
[3] Sensual Pleasure. [4] Love.

"The bitter sweet, the honey blent with gall,
Eros or Anteros; for weal, for woe
Him the destroyer, him the saviour call."
Thus spoke my guide, and pointed to the show
Ranged on the topmost crag: then sighing, "More
Not mine is now to tell, nor thine to know;
Till She, their Mother and thine, unbar the door
And bid thee enter, where the sevenfold stream
In rainbow hues reflects the lustral shore.
Undimmed there shall thy eyes peruse the dream
Waking misnamed by those on earth, who move
Acting or suffering, till with colourless beam
Arise the real morn, th' essential Love."

CANTO XII

Introduction : The Earth described by my guide—The Spirit of the Earth is seen and lifts us to the summit of the mountain, with the aid of the seventh apparition, Love—We reach the entrance of the Spirit region, where the Spirit of Earth sits as Portress—My guide asks admittance for me—She answers that the Spirit-world is divided into Seven regions, corresponding to the Seven chief pursuits of man : Love, Ambition, Art, Knowledge, Religion, Science, Pleasure—All have to be traversed, and I am commanded to record what is displayed to me.

"SHE sits, a Queen, a Mother ; crowned her head
With thorn-twined roses, but the thorns are more ;
And o'er her face a sightless veil is spread.
Fair is her robe, but stained with dust and gore,
With countless forms of beauty manifold
And ghastliest things betwixt embroidered o'er.
In her right hand a sceptre of pure gold
She bears ; its touch is life, its touch is death,
Makes old the new, and new-creates the old.
To all that breathes she portions out the breath,
The force assigns ; then bids it wax or vade[1]
Through heights above, through depths unknown beneath.
Love in her light, and hatred in her shade,
Yet she nor loves, nor hates, nor joys, nor grieves,

[1] "A weakened form of *Fade*" (Skeat.)

"Alike to her if bloom the flowers or fade.
She knows, she numbers each, the sands, the leaves,
The water-drops, the motes that dance in light,
And the great depth that each and all receives,
Are hers, the multitudinous seas, the might
Of storms, the central fires, the crested snow,
Highest or lowest, equal in her sight.
Her portioned kingdom these, while to and fro
Revolve the zodiac orbits, and perform
The will that none but He who wills may know."
Thus spoke my guide, and pointed where a form
Darkened the topmost crags, as dimly shows
Blackening through the rent veil of drifted storm
Some mighty headland's ominous shade to those
Who wandering long by trackless seas at last
Shelter or shipwreck find; even to such close
Our way was brought, when those sheer heights o'erpast
By the unresisted power whose master-spell
Chains and sustains all being, our footsteps fast
Stood on the topmost summit; so befell
A wonder like to his or more, who slept
Pillowed on stone in Mahanaim's dell,
Stairfoot of heaven; for he, my Guide, o'erleapt
With me the limits of dream, and in the sooth
Of the real world with his my presence kept.
Yet oft to purblind eyes unwonted truth
Wears falsehood's semblance; but the sculptured shape
Hides in the quarried marble's mass uncouth.
So while e'en now 'neath that precipitous cape
At gaze we stood, nor path discerned nor sign
Up the steep barrier, barred all hope's escape,
Sudden as in still eve a fiery line
Drawn thwart the darkness of a sultry cloud
Bids its hid rifts in sharp-drawn clearness shine,
So from the topmost parapet's misty shroud

Down flashed a winding stair, that to our feet
By ready steps the utmost heights allowed.
And he[1] who made the sevenfold band complete
In rosiest splendour reached a glowing hand
Outstretched our upward toil to aid and greet.
But ere our footsteps well the crowning strand
Had pressed, the vision faded, from the lawn
As fades on near approach the rainbow band;
And in its place, likest an Autumn dawn
Margined by rain-streaks, the opposing way[2]
Seemed small and dim, 'mid rocky walls withdrawn.
But in the midst, as through the formless grey
Vaporous, shows the daystar's outlined track
Now risen, so showed the Portress of the way.[2]
"Approach," then thus the Master, "courage slack
Is hail to harvest-fields; be bold, be wise,
Nor from thy greeting let due reverence lack."
So near I drew where full those steadfast eyes
Unpassioned met my own; and to my speech
Made "Mother" prelude: but at morn as dies
The sudden breeze that from the Eastern reach
Heralds the sun, then drops, its message o'er,
As dies the wavelet on the noontide beach,—
So in that Presence stilled my voice, that more
Sought to declare, tongue-palsied stayed; and dumb
Stone-like I stood Earth's empress-power before.
But my true guide who from the homeless home
Of life's untruth had led me to the land
Of all that was, and is, and is to come,
Placed on my down-bowed head his covering hand,
And for my speech his own advanced; its tone
With reverence mixed new accents of command.
"Sister, to whom ere years were yet, the throne
Of many-tinted earth was given by Him
Whose will we work when most we work our own,

[1] Love. [2] *Sic* MSS.

In sun, or sunlit orb, or star-mist dim,
Differing in power, yet monarchs all, to reign
Each in his range to being's outmost rim;
Lesser than mine thy planet realm, a grain
Of dust to vastest Alp, or in compare
With ocean depths a drop of casual rain.
Yet royal thou, though less; thy palace fair;
And the bright vine of life in myriad hues
O'er walls and vault has wove its tapestry there.
Small orb, but sparkling with the diamond dews
Of human thought and human love; a bride
Whom for himself a god unblamed might choose.
Thine the dark woods, full rivers, pastures wide
Spread for thy numberless children; thy great store
Open to all; thy gifts to none denied.
O many-flickering lake, by the firm shore
Girt of unchanging life; O wondrous dream
Imaged of truth, that wakes to sleep no more.
Fleeting thy light, yet roseate, from the beam
Of other suns than thine; the eternal hills
Quiver, but fade not from the mirrored stream.
Rend thou the veil, disperse the mist that fills
The portal to th' archetypal world, where show
Even as they are the joys, the cares, the ills,
The flowers that deck man's path, the thorns that strow.
Be these to him declared who suppliant stands
By silence worthier made thy grace to know,
The pilgrim of my love, from the vain lands
Of semblance brought, receive the trust, to thee,
As me, confided th' all-moulding hands.
Shaped in thy womb his substance, though by me
Informed with star-lit fire; on both his hope
Is stayed; but mine the guidance, thine the key."
Scarce had his words an end, the rock-piled cope
Was cleft; and through the rifts a brightness shone

Torrent-like downward poured on ridge and slope.
And a great voice, most like the mingling tone
Of woods and far-off waves, when storm and sea
Together surge beneath th' Autumnal zone,
Thus spoke reply; "Child of eternity,
Though born in time; thou, fathered by the star
Bright lord and leader of the Austral sky,
Yet not my child the less, though rapt afar
Awhile in other orbs than mine, and here,
Where things that are not verge on things that are,
Approach. The secret paths that year by year
In light and shadow on my convex weaved
Lead up to all men hope, believe, or fear,
To thee are visible made, no more deceived
By semblant show; the life o'erlaid by death
This; the hid pearl, doubted, denied, believed
By each in turn. Love's heaven, Ambition's wreath,
Art's witchery, Knowledge sought by land and main,
Faith's phantasms; all that swells an idle breath
With prayers, and moans, and paeans; Science vain
Of wisdom void; and Sense of sense the meed
In its own bounds of pleasure, rest, or pain;
The sevenfold Sphinx, the riddle all must read
Or serve unread from sunbright locks to grey,
With aching brows, tired limbs, and hearts that bleed.
But thou, not thus thy portion; pass thy way
Through all my realm, and what thou seest, record,
Lessons and landmarks of a future day."
Here ceased th' articulate voice; the mighty word
Like sound of organ quires, now pealing high
Now low, now clear, now faint at evening heard
Far and more far retired; nor now could I
From sound translate the thought; nor yet the veil
Of Nature's flesh-woven life from ear and eye
Was all withdrawn, nor mortal words avail
To mete th' immortal, marred by symbols weak,

As broken speech of childhood's stammering tale.
There let it rest, nor further answer seek
To the great question; nor untimely move
The natural bounds; till through the death-mists bleak
Gleam the white morn, the reign of deathless Love.

CANTO XIII

We see a plain, whence rise seven peaks, islanded in a boundless sea: we are suddenly borne thither, and at a gate find the Spirit of Ambition as Guardian—My Guide congratulates me on not having obeyed him in life—The hill of military and civil Ambition rises before us—No one is seen: and I wait by a fountain, on the walls about which are graved the names of great men.

Not yet, not yet that morn; the imaged ray
Is but the nebulous sun-streak[1] o'er the face
Of tropic night, where winds the zodiac way
'Mid the twelve guardians of the yearly trace
High in meridian heavens, then fades before
The manifest day, broad reddening in its place.
Such is the vision; yet, O my friend, the more
My debt to thee, who through th' uncertain night
Hast imaged forth true day's uptreasured store;
And the sun's course in that faint cone of light
Is rightly tracked; and in the semblance strange
Of the vain dream is substance given to sight.
We stood; far off in mottled interchange
Of light and shade, the plain beyond, uprose
Peak over peak, a mountain's sevenfold range.
And midmost there, as in a petalled rose

[1] The Zodiacal Light.

The central gold, glittered a dazzling blaze,
An ever quivering splendour, such as throws
Some crystalline fount, struck by the noonday rays
Of the clear sun, where plexed in rainbow chain
Sparkles the plashing water's diamond maze.
But hills and plain beyond to the utmost strain
Of sight's survey, unspecked by sail or oar
Lay the large stillness of a circling main
Unfathomably calm; along the shore
Of that charmed isle, their ward, the waters slept
Secure in their own depth; no breakers' roar
Was theirs nor tidal flow; no seabird swept
That silvery floor, where far from change or time
Immutability her throne had set.
But the desire which erst in boyhood's prime
Th' unseen to see, the unknown to touch and know,
Impelled my restless way from clime to clime,
Drove me, as when Autumnal storm-blasts blow
Flies the driven leaf, and through the gusty air
Forth whirled the circling swifts confusedly go.
Sheer the descent; nor ledge nor rock-hewn stair
Waited the foot; nor had the eagle's wing
Through that great void availed our flight to bear.
And how we passed I know not, nor can bring
Back to remembrance aught, so swift our change
Downward from those black rocks to where the Spring
In fadeless beauty clothed that island strange;
And high 'mid forest belts of densest green
Towered in seven purple peaks the central range.
These and the shore betwixt a leafy screen
Continuous fenced them round, as guard from view
Blank walls of palace-pride some Eastern Queen.
But as we left the shore, and nearer drew
Crossing the sunny slope to where the shade
Of that high wood was wet with sunless dew,
Midmost a gateway set our steps delayed;

Of gold or gilded was the arch, and bore
Sceptres and crowns, and trophied arms displayed.
And in fair letters; "Enter; this the door
Of Power," was written there; and close beside
Was one, half seen when the high crags before,
Wondering, that hand and crown in outstretched pride
Had I beheld; but now the form complete
What erst was hid to curious sight supplied.
Dark iron with gold embossed from head to feet
His armour wrapped him round; and on his brow
A star that with heaven's huntsman[1] might compete.
Proud was his look, as who might scarce allow
To others place, likest a conquering chief
When at his feet submissive foemen bow.
"Well known to me thou comest," in accents brief
Nor without scorn his speech; "yet enter here
Even thou, though scant thy garland, sere thy leaf."
Abashed I heard, yet lingered, "Shame nor fear
Befit thee," thus the Master; "scorn with scorn
Repel; who wins may slight the loser's jeer.
The phantom prize on earth by thee forborne
In phantom form thou seest; the illusion vain
By many sought, the crown in aching worn
By many heads, noblest of mortal strain;
They faded as it faded; of their glory
Annals miswrit, misread, alone remain.
Till in th' appointed time the earth grown hoary
Their trace forgets; as melt from the clear blue
Light clouds, mouldered the scroll, forgot the story;
But the end is not yet." He ceased, and drew
My steps with his where 'midst the wooded close
Wound a low path, leaf-fenced from outer view.
This too we passed; and now before us rose
The first of those seven hills, beheld afar,
Now to our steps permitted, to disclose

[1] Sirius, as the star attendant on the constellation Orion.

Th' abode of those bold spirits who erst by war
Or statecraft strove to scale the perilous height
Where sit the charioteers of Empire's car
Drawn by her millions. Round I cast my sight
Eager those great ones to behold who shone
Meteors or stars of earth's tempestuous night.
But on that mountain visible shape was none
To meet the questioning eye; the noontide heat
Glared on untenanted lawn and whitening stone.
"Awhile," then spoke my guide, "thy weary feet
Stay, where yon fount fresh from the mountain breast,
Scarce seen for clearness, skirts the marble seat
Hard by the source; The season given to rest
Refuse not; oft what toil has sought in vain
Is of a timely pause self-offered guest."
Then where to its first slant upheaved the plain
In green and gold, he pointed to a cell
Of marble blocks rough-hewn but pure of stain;
And 'neath the low-browed vault a brimming well
Poured sea-ward forth its wave; and the cool shade
Like a broad curtain thwart the doorway fell.
Hither by jasper steps of easiest grade
Fixed in the turfy slope, we upward went,
Till at the door a pause our footsteps made.
Then by the rill that ceaseless from the rent
Close at our feet outstreamed we sat; the gloom
Unwonted, all within to darkness blent;
Till on the fronting wall a restless loom
Of light, reflex from those pure waters, traced
To gradual sight the fount and vaulted room.
With mighty names the walls around were graced
Of ancient fame, honoured memorials all;
And some were fresh, some worn and part defaced.
But while I strove to read, the plashing fall
Of th' ever-bubbling waters, and the dance

Of those wan lights on roof and floor and wall,
Dazed my tired sense, as chill-born mists advance
O'er a calm sea, so swift that ere men know
Whence risen, they close them in; so closed the trance
On mind and eye; the indoors gloom, the glow
Without, the ripple of th' unresting rill,
Nor sound nor motion else, above, below
All hushed in seemful sleep, more slumbrous still
Than convent courts when August's noontide beam
Whitens from base to crest Caserta's hill,[1]
Wrought on me there; till thought dissolved in dream
Of wildest shapes confused, a phantom train,
The dust of sleep, upstirred by Morpheus' team,
Soon to subside, as leaves on Autumn's plain
Whirl to the breeze awhile, then strew the ground
In windless shelter heaped: all things attain
Or soon or late their own appointment, found
Toil's ultimate guerdon; who most strongly strove
Securest rest, Love's champions, girded round
By the everlasting arms of favouring Love.

[1] Near Naples. The convent is S. Maria del Angelo.

CANTO XIV

I sleep, and a dream carries me as a boy to the Yarmouth coast, reading Plutarch, and full of ambitious thoughts—I wake: a trumpet is heard, and the Roman legions appear, Julius Caesar in their midst—I lament the downfall of his Empire —He tells me that I am now in Elysium: describes his career, and the ultimate survival of Rome after the Empire had fallen—He passes away with a sigh.

THE tangled star-maze of th' abyss; the zone
  Twelve-blazoned of mid heaven; the nightly change
Waxing or waning of th' unquiet moon,
Th' alternate day, the seasons' yearly range,
  The balanced rod nice-poised, and what beside
Man's use has found or skill devised of strange,
Measurements all, outportioned from the tide
  That measures them by hours and days and years
As custom wills, or shows of sense divide;
Time, on whose forward pinions hopes and fears
  Thick cluster, on whose path o'ergone remain
Dead memories, dead regrets, dead smiles, dead tears,
Might tell how long fettered in slumber's chain
  I lay within that cell; but time as men
Count its slow pulse, in that new land was none,
For all was present there; the questioned "When?"
  Had but one answer, "Now"; the careless hours

Had loosed their idle cars, unhooked the rein.
But I whom to this rest the fateful Powers
Had brought, was by the vision borne afar,
Where o'er brown marsh and barren sand-hills lowers
Cloud-veiled th' Icenian[1] sky; a land of shade
Edged by a cold green sea; and on the shore
The ebbing tide a sea-weed fringe had made.
There on the sand reclined I seemed once more,
As erst in ready youth, to turn the page
By Chaeronea's chronicler[2] placed in store
Of Greece and Rome; heirlooms of nobler age
To lesser times and men: once more I read
Of mighty deeds, high thoughts and counsel sage,—
So ruled the mirrored dream; till overhead
A crown with laurel wreathed of regal gold,
Fit meed of high emprize to victory led,
Stooped to my reach; I clutched it; but, behold,
Ere yet my fingers closed it round, 'twas gone;
And in its stead a formless vapour cold
Circled me there; then broke the dream: alone
But wakeful now I sat, and watched the spring
Chequer with threads of light the vaulted stone.
Then, as far off first heard the tempest's wing
Slow flaps in muffled beats, till nearer grown
On their full sweep the clouds their death-bolts bring,
So through the stilly air a trumpet blown
Was faintly heard, then louder, till the place
Shook as a storm-blown tree, so shrill the tone;
And flutes, and drums, and tramp of measured pace,
With clash of arms, and voices harsh between,
Thickened and grew; as when the hounded chase
Bursts in full cry from 'yond the forest screen,
And sight to sound gives meaning, so my ear
Lent form and substance to the cause unseen.
Not long, for now alternate helm and spear

[1] Norfolk. [2] Plutarch.

With sword and pike and bannered sign displayed,
Wave upon wave the serried ranks drew near ;
Standard and crest, and short home-thrusting blade,
The conquerors of a world, from Britain's coast
And Atlas hoar to Tigris' palm-fringed wave.
O unreturning greatness ! glory lost
Too soon ! for ever lost ! so mustering stood
Full told my eyes before that giant host.
Then right from left divided, as the flood
Of the Erythraean sea, when cloven in twain,
Pathway to Israel's wonder-working rod ;
And a great cry like thunder, when the rain
Stayed in mid down-pour gives the lightning road,
Of "Caesar !" rent the air ; then stilled again,
As with slow step but firm, and eyes that glowed
Instinct with quenchless fire, the form of him
Whose name is one with empire, forward strode.
But dim the glories on his crest, and dim
The laurel crown, withered and stained, that yet
Wove its vain memories round the helmet rim.
In his pale face deep-furrowed care had set,
Blended with pitying scorn, the lines of thought
Love twinned with hate, and triumph with regret.
Downwards I cast my eyes, such reverence wrought
In me that greatness ruined, that deep decay
Of giant strength to phantom weakness brought ;
Disthroned Hyperion of a vaster day ;
And much I grieved that Nature's noblest birth
Should like her meanest pass in shade away.
O labours ill-bestowed ! O little worth
Of prize, hard sought, late found, untimely lost !
Dross bought with silver, harvest reaped in dearth !
Where now the trophies by that matchless host
Reared on a prostrate world ? thy glories where,
Imperial Rome, undying Maro's [1] boast ?

[1] Virgil.

Fallen are the leaves, the branches barked and bare,
Hewn down the trunk, the very roots uprent
Of that great tree, the She-wolf's fateful lair.
Keen his dark eyes that awful Presence bent
On mine, suffused with tears; then said, "Thy grief
On mine, on Rome's decay is idly spent.
Not surer fades and falls the autumnal leaf
Than fade and fall earth's empires, though the green
Of some more lasting show, of some more brief.
But greater than the Done has ever been
The Doer; and Will outlasts what Will has made;
That the firm substance; this the fading screen.
I know not who thou art, nor how conveyed
Hither, nor greatly care; but sure I deem
Not without cause thou walk'st the phantom glade
Elysium called of old, the partial dream
Foreshadowing perfect truth, exempt by fate
From Stygian bond, or draught of Lethe's stream.
So to fair earth returned may'st thou relate
What here thou saw'st or heard'st, the joy, the pain,
Their doom who climb the difficult heights of state.
Towns sacked, fields wasted, blood poured forth like rain
From Gaul's full rivers and Britain's fog-veiled shore
To Libya's sands, and red Pharsalia's plain,
These were my onward path, till earth no more
Gave prize or space for conquest; all was mine,
Till scaled the rock-stair Sacred named of yore
To the Capitolian height; a god the shrine
Received me, born of gods; so spoke the voice
Of Mantua's bard, nor erred the heaven-taught line.
Then, Lord of evil and good, I made the choice
Of good; a wounded world I healed, and bade
Who feared securely dwell, who mourned rejoice.
In fair Astraea's [1] wreath I hid the blade

[1] Justice.

"Of lawless war; the debt of tears and blood,
An Empire's due, my peaceful sway repaid.
Nor long misrule succeeding, nor the brood
Of despot heirs, my portioned empire's shame,
Nor the brute violence of the Northern flood,
Has all o'erthrown the fabric on my name
Upreared, nor all the mighty lines effaced
Graven by my skill, nor turned my praise to blame.
Such art the structure crowned, such forethought based,
For others, not for me; strong to outlast
The heart that willed it, and the hand that traced.
What portion mine, behold!"—Aside he cast
The purple-broidered robe, where scarred his breast
'Mid many wounds the deadliest and the last
By caitiff Brutus made, at Rome's behest
Slaying her slayer; even he, whom least that deed
Behoved, of all best trusted, loved the best.
Such end ambition finds, th' awarded meed
Of self-sought greatness, crime avenged by crime,
The deathful harvest of a poison seed.
Then as from spring-tide fields the glittering rime,
Work of the keen-starred night, dissolves away
Soon as their slanted height the sunbeams climb,
Banner and sword and spear and helmed array
Traceless from sight were gone; and with a sigh
Sadder than words that Mightiest passed away.
And he, my brother guide, approaching nigh,
But whence I knew not, roused me; soft he laid
His hand on mine, and words of purport high
Spoke that my song repeats not; from the shade
Of that cool dome we went by lawn and grove,
Where penance-bound to exile, haunt the glade
Ambition's outcasts from the realm of Love.

CANTO XV

We continue the ascent, as if up a volcano's side : groans heard underground—A dense cloud comes over us : then a lightning-flash, and the spirit of Oliver Cromwell passes by in the storm—I see him in vision standing beside his own corpse : he laments his loneliness of heart—My guide explains his sorrow as caused by his crimes—Daylight returns ; I see many Greek, Roman, and Carthaginian leaders ; Scythians and Tartars ; European generals : all men of pure heroism.

THOUGHTFUL, as who from kingly palace back
Return, and weigh the converse held, we went
Where on the hill-side wound our upward track.
Steep was the way, 'mid massy boulders rent,
So seemed, by earthquake force, and tumbled mound
Of mortared brick or stone at random blent.
And evermore our steps beneath the ground
Shifted and shook, and like a mandrake's groan
Replied from deeps unseen a hollow sound.
Yet with bright flowers that mountain turf was strown
Of thousand hues ; and the soft-breathing air
Mingled its gusts with music's distant tone.
Such, if with greater things may less compare,
In Spring's best days the winding slopes that smile
Where bursts through Aetna's rifts the Typhon glare ;
A dread with beauty overlaid ; the while

Loaded as with strange weight my weary feet
Made scant fulfilment of th' accustomed toil.
Veiled in dim clouds the sun-disk, yet with heat
Heavy the air; and far the mountain peak
In faintest outline rose my eye to greet.
"Master and guide," I questioned, "why so weak
My limbs, erst strong to labour? whence the gloom
Thus overspread? and whose the moans that speak
Of grief, unresting in th' all-resting tomb?
For tomb this mount I deem; such semblance bear
The ruined heaps, tangled with random bloom."
"Brother," his answer thus began; but ere
To sequent speech the words were shaped, there fell
Darkness on darkness round us; and the air
Grew thick with formless dread, as when the spell
Of Samovedian wizards darkens o'er
The frost-bright stars with smoke-clouds breathed of hell,
Round the doomed fishers by Alaska's shore.
And peal on peal quick following, onward came
Mixed with a whirlwind blast the thunder's roar;
Till flashed 'mid all a waft of sheeted flame,
As though Heaven's vault to fire were turned; and through
The quick succeeding crash was heard the name
Of him whom Marston's field and Worcester's knew
The striker-down of thrones, the iron rod
That shattered friend and foeman, old and new.
O'er necks of kings and king-like councils trod
His heavy foot, nor paused till reached the height,
The perilous height, where man is paired with god.
There more than king he stood; nor banded might,
Nor murder's whetted blade, nor vengeful hate,
Nor life-slaying care that knows not day from night,
Could quell that stubborn will, till the dark fate,
Bearer of victory's wreath twice proved in war,
With the third mercy crowned the destined date

That ranked the mortal where th' immortals are;
While from the storm-swept land that greatness passed
As passes from heaven's scroll a cancelled star.
Then quenched the lightning, stilled the gusty blast,
And a grey light as of the fabled morn
When sun nor moon were yet, the mount o'ercast,
Where on a couch of gold inwove with thorns
What seemed a warrior lay; and by the bed,
With hand close-pressed to brow as one that mourns,
A living form beside the motionless dead
In very likeness stood, as stands a friend
By friend himself has slain, nor turns his head
Though in the sight be torture's worst; so blend
Past joys enhanced by present wretchedness,
And the great anguish of the manifest end;
And his full loss he knows, yet none the less
Clings to the shadow of the day gone by
To clothe or bare his spirit's nakedness.
"O lonely path by which I clomb so high!
O lonely height where throned and crowned I sate!"
Thus spoke the voice of that fallen majesty:
"No friend, for friendship claims an equal state;
No love; for love ne'er shared a partner throne;
No truth; for truth turns from a palace gate.
The beast its fellow finds; in loving tone
Bird answers bird; the common insect race
Together herds; the field's wild flower alone
Blooms not, but clusters with its kind in place;
I only friendless, loveless; mine to hear
No sociate voice; to see no trustful face.
Alone I hope, joy, triumph, grieve, or fear,
Alone unloved I live, unmourned I die,
My honour smirched, my guerdon vanished clear."
Such heavy words he spoke; then with a sigh
Drearier than moan of wintry winds that wail
Round snow-choked doors when lowers December's sky,

Made fitting close to the else unfinished tale;
As though th' unmanly scorn and shame to tell
Wrought on the dead no words might there avail:
Then faded slow from sight, while as in spell
Entranced I stood; and faint, and yet more faint
Came the sad sounds, Ambition's late-tolled knell.
While thus my guide; "What ails thee? the complaint
Thou hear'st, and hearing mourn'st, the meed displays
Of mightiest deeds deformed by self-ful taint.
He and his like the temple of high praise
Reared on the marsh of wrong, and saw too late
Sunk in its depths the pile they strove to raise.
Ruined the massive tower; the gilded state
With fire consumed; the statue fair o'erthrown,
The tree cut down, the garden desolate.
Yet not in vain they strove; nor thou bemoan
As profitless all their toil; the plastered screen [1]
Flakes off, but firm abides the central stone."
Even as he ceased, o'erhead the cloudy screen [1]
Parted, as mists of chilly morning bred
Break in thin wreaths from off the sun-warmed green.
Light blew the mountain breeze; the sounds of dread
Ceased from beneath our feet; on mound and stone
Tall grass and glittering flowers their carpet spread.
By field and copse bright the glad day-star shone,
Not ours but like to ours; the slanting ground
Slope above slope built up the mountain cone.
"Here, till the years complete their lustral round,
They dwell, the brave, who pure of factious crime
In fair-fought field their brows with laurel crowned.
Here Peleus' child and Ammon's, with the prime
Of the old heroic bands by heroes led,
From Argive shores, or Haemus' [2] sterner clime.
The champions here in Latian warfare bred,

[1] *Sic* MSS.
[2] Mountain-range bounding Thrace on the North.

"Decius, Camillus, and th' unsullied fame
Of great Marcellus, and the Libyan dead
Followers of him who on the altar flame
Swore the dire hatred that nor Alps could bar,
Nor Cannae satiate, nor lost Zama tame.
And others there from barbarous realms afar,
Scythian, Albanian, Tartar, and the bands
Of later days and new-found forms of war
To happier times unknown; but valour stands
To its own centre true, whate'er of change
Wrought in its guise by varying arts or lands.
All these in honour strove, nor from that range
To meaner ends declined, nor aught allowed
From noble thought and loyal purpose strange."
Not inly heard alone, nor all aloud
Such words were borne, while o'er the mountain high
Roved my free gaze, unchecked by mist or cloud.
As when long days of rain are past, the sky
With countless flecks of chequered stillness gleams,
Snow-white at noon, at eve of crimson dye,
So showed on that clear height in following streams
Of bright procession forms, now silver bright,
Now reddened as with blood, then changed as dreams
Change to pale shades confused; from utmost sight
They pass, as from sea-margined cliffs beheld
Lost in converging lines the sea-birds' flight.
So by the trodden path our course we held
Cross the wide mount, conversing much on those
Whom greed of power or lust of fame compelled
On loftiest deeds and noblest, though the close
Oft marred the outset, and the baser strove
Still with the worthier sense; till blanched the rose,
Red stained to white in lustral baths of Love.

CANTO XVI

Sky and landscape change: vision of the Russian steppes in winter: burning of Moscow—Napoleon appears: his downfall and greatness in ruin—He describes his career; laments his ambition, and tells his thoughts of glory and defeat, as contrasted with the life of his peasant-guide, when descending the Alps to Marengo: recognising the peasant's as happier than his own.

WHEN from the narrowed vault of wintry days
Northward returns Heaven's king, and hour by hour
In wider circles darts his quickening rays,
And loosed from bonds of numbing frost the power
Of life Promethean swells in every bough
To glistening green, or white unfolding flower,
Then joys the peasant lad as to the plough
He yokes the stall-pent team, and cheerly loud
Whistles, of mist and chill forgetful now;
Then if by chance from the dim North a cloud
Swiftly up-swept, blots daylight's silvery beam,
And all night long expands its icy shroud
O'er earth and heaven, till late the dawning gleam
Reveals but undistinguished snow-heaps, sad
The plough-boy stands beside th' unharnessed team;
So when with better hopes my heart was glad
In gladness of that mount, a shadow vast

In joyless veil once more that vision clad.
Whence risen that cloud I marked not, but aghast
Felt its approach ere seen; a sudden chill
Smote me, as when th' eclipse with ominous haste
Devours the midday sun-god; grove and hill
Were lost to view, erased the guiding way
As sand tracks by the advancing sea-waves, till
Wide stretched around a level waste and grey
Of snow-drift, ash-bestrewn, and foul with blood,
And phantom shapes distort, and mere dismay.
But where on the low marge a fir-spiked wood
Belted the plain, uprose a flickering glow
Of cities fire-consumed, yet unsubdued.
Nor sound was here nor life; the carrion crow
Had left the wolf-gnawed bones; the ashes, cold
As those who lit them erst, bestrewed the snow.
Only like one lost in a trackless wold
Moved a grey-mantled form, with brows severe,
And folded arms, and braid of tarnished gold.
And the great crown that Monza's [1] sons revere,
Iron and gold, his temples girt; his eye
Nor lit with hopeful ray, nor dimmed with fear.
Not ruined, but ruin's self in imagery
So showed that awful Shape; above the gloom
Of a lost world made fitting canopy.
Before his steps with blood-stained claws and plume
What eagle seemed or vulture ill defined
Hovered, the phantom of a vampire tomb.
Southward the Emperor bent his way; behind
The fire-girt snows, a blood-lake broad before,
And shattered limbs of men the pathway lined.
But, far the corpse-strewn plain and blood-marsh o'er
On the low sky in cloudlike distance rose
A barren rock, girt by the Atlantic's roar.

[1] Near Milan: a city in which the "Iron Crown" has been long kept.

—Last of the giant kinship! last of those
Who sole a world outpoise, the Titan brood
Conquerors of gods, and conquered in the close!
Too late thy birth, Napoleon! the young blood
Of earth was spent; the weakness of her age
Mixed with thy strength, that else had well withstood
Fortune's blind chance, and envy's banded rage:
But the clay marred the iron; thy tale was writ
Too large for dwindling Europe's narrowed page.
Now torn the scroll, in nameless fragments split
The statue lies, 'mid weeds and shards o'erthrown,
And over its wreck weak shadows pass and flit.
Yet the great Will, the spirit's deathless throne,
In realms of truth and spirit abides, possessed
Not now in others' knowledge, but its own.
"But thou who fain would'st know what worst or best
Awaits earth's chiefs, to him of conquerors known
Mightiest and last, be thy desire addressed."
Not with more eager haste to springs foreshown
Cool in the rock's cleft side may travellers turn,
Driven on by thirst almost to madness grown
When shadeless all the ways in sunshine burn,
Than I, made bold by my consenting guide,
Drew nigh to that great ghost intent to learn.
But to my question turned not nor replied
Awhile the iron-crowned phantom, with fixed gaze
Still on the distance bent, as who descried
Something that verge beyond of dateless days,
Till dim his eyes with tears, and sad his look
Bent on me from that far-off island's haze.
Then spoke;—"From loneliest heights unmarked the brook
Descends; then swollen to shoreless tide below
For the great ocean's self is oft mistook.
So mightiest years from smallest day-dawns flow,
And mine were of the mightiest, till the crown

"Of Europe's empire widened to my brow.
Kings I upraised at will, at will cast down;
Nations I made or marred; their lesser life
Bloomed in my smile, or withered at my frown.
O ill-won prize with thankless labour rife!
Empty of rest or joy! O toil to toil
Successive linked, and strife begot by strife!
Till the once-purposed goal in wild turmoil
Wavering is lost to sight, as 'mid the wave
The beacon-buoy when maddening storms upboil.
Of others lord, of my own self the slave
Was I; till tired of fame and power and throne
Back to the abyss its misused gifts I gave.
Yet through the blinding mists around me thrown
By my own splendour, once a better day
With short-houred gleam on my life's pathway shone.
Now hear. What time from Alpine slopes the May
Had stripped their yearly veil, with the great host
To me and conquest vowed, I passed my way.
Vanquished behind us frowned the glacier frost,
No barrier now; and sea-like stretched beneath
Marengo's plains, sure victory's promised boast.
While down the slippery paths, a slackened wreath,
Unwound the sequent files of those who then
Were life, and strength, and courage, and hopeful breath.
I looked and gloried in my might, of men
The chiefest I, sun of the secular day
That reaps the harvest of time's whitening grain.
For in my grasp I knew the guerdon lay,
Not Austria's spoils alone; but all the worth
Frontiered from Volga's banks to Calpe's [1] bay;
The five-zoned world my throne, the populous earth
Held in my empire's fee, the future years
Named of my name, and cycled from my birth.
An instant, all was changed, as changed appears

[1] Gibraltar.

"The shifted scene where meets the nightly throng
To acted semblance of past joys or tears.
I saw till the hot life those paths along
Death-chilled to skeletons, strewed the mountain side,
Torn shreds of flags, and rusted arms among.
Nor these alone, but all that vision wide
Of empire nor by space nor years confined
Shrivelled and scant its former lines belied.
A painted screen it seemed where night-long wind
And rain have wreaked their will, a hollow shell,
Of rocket fire the smirched and shattered rind.
Then a great darkness o'er my spirit fell,
And grief of wasted life, and labour vain,
As his who spellbound toils, yet knows the spell.
But at my side, close by my bridle rein
That morn a peasant lad of mountain race
Guided my pathway to the Lombard plain,
Of sturdy limb, crisp hair, and sun-tanned face,
With laughing eyes, quick glance, and careless tread,
Unshod, yet careless of the rough-strewn ways.
O happy life, by its own purpose led
In youth, and strength, and joy, to the ultimate goal
Of satiate being from its own banquet fed;
One with the winds that blow, the stars that roll,
One with itself, in its own self complete;
Part, but in concord with th' existent whole.
I saw and knew, O knowledge bitter-sweet!
His the true substance, mine the shadow vain,
His the rich treasure, mine the tinselled cheat.
O jewel, not mine! O freedom from the chain
That bound me! Seen from far, apprized, confest,
Joy known and measured by contrasted pain!
It might not be; nor ever to my breast
Returned that envied pang, that mirrored bliss,

"Visioned, yet real, possessing, not possessed,
To earth by life denied, restored in this
At last, at last, by cycled years that move
Through pain remorseful to the pardoning kiss,
Seal of new life, sealed by the lips of Love."

CANTO XVII

Napoleon regrets that in the peasant of the Alps he failed to recognise his own true star—My guide comforts him—We enter a fair meadow ; the region of ambitious Statesmen and Counsellors—The first who speaks is Thomas Cromwell ; he describes his power and downfall ; the results of his work for England console him—He points out the two statesmen associated with him as true national benefactors, the elder Küprili of Anatolia, Grand Vizier ; and Iyeyas, first of the Japanese war-ministers or Shogans.

THEN as his speech he ended that great ghost
Full on me turned his eyes, and said, "To thee
Is given what,—mine an hour,—by me was lost.
He my true guide, lord of my destiny,
The Star that ruled my ways, in visible guise
My comrade deigned for that short morn to be :
He to the heart revealed, though to the eyes
Veiled in ambiguous form, too soon withdrawn
'Mid earth-sprung mists, light of the eternal skies."
No more he said, but upward gazed, at dawn
As he who seeks, nor finds, some vanished star
Through the pale haze o'er heaven's pure blackness drawn.
But with a smile like hers who from long war
Her spouse returning greets, and pitying sees
Scarce healed across his unhelmed brow the scar

That tells of combat past, till by degrees
Pain's memory fades in present happiness
Of rest secure, and conflict lapped in peace;—
Even with such pitying look, of worst distress
Healing and balm, my guide beheld, and gave
To pride remorseful pardoning love's caress.
Then vanished all, the fires, the snow-piled grave
Of perished hosts, the blood-stream's girdling zone,
The far-seen isle of doom, the prisoning wave,
Ambition's sum; like smoke they passed; alone
At gaze we stood; before us meadows green
And tufted groves, by bluest heaven o'ershone.
A realm of ordered calm, a restful scene
Welcome to mind and eye, where nought of dread
Or past distress or present ill was seen.
"Master," I questioned thus, "whose care has led
Hither my steps unthwarted, to the abode
Of these the truly living, miscalled the dead,
Tell me where now the rocks that late we trode
'Mid storm and dreariest gloom? and whose the land
Fair spread to sight? on whom this peace bestowed?"
Answered my guide, "By many a path is planned
Th' ascent of earth's high thrones, but loftiest climb
The masters of the sword, and firmest stand;
Rightly the noblest held; but marred by crime
Too oft the crown they gain, and dim with rust
Of tears and blood the glories of their time.
Like cloud-built towers at eve dissolved, their trust
Fades with the fading years, till each proud name
Once high as heaven, lies vile in common dust.
Eagles of barren heights! Less vaunt their fame
Attends, who strove with hands unarmed to seize
Dominion's helm, the olive-wreath their claim,
In court or hall or council; next to these,
But lesser far, shalt thou behold the band
Of patriots called, vanes of the popular breeze.

"'Mid the still pastures of this guarded land
The statesmen-shepherds bide, till slow the hours
Bring round, its course complete, the dial hand.
And green the leaves above, and bright the flowers,
But fruitless all, and sighs the breezes are
That stir the boughs, watered with tears for showers."
He spoke, and pointed where nor near nor far
Figures I saw that measured moved and slow,
As loth by vulgar haste their state to mar.[1]
Towards us their way was bent, in seemly row
And rich attire, yet grave, as theirs who pass
From palace gates to grace some courtly show;
With even steps they trod the yielding grass
Till front to front we stood, with greeting fair
Made and returned, befitting time and place.
Then they, "At whose behest th' unfooted stair
That hither leads was yours to climb? and how
From different worlds together linked ye fare?"
Answered my guide; "She whom yourselves avow
Mother and Queen our path assigned, and gave
Free passage o'er the mystic mountain's brow.
What kinship mortals with immortals have
Is his with mine, and both are blent in one;
Nor ours is more to tell, nor yours to crave."
As a grey lake touched by the morning sun
Sparkles in countless smiles, so brightly there
On every face the sign of welcome shone.
And I, though wondering much, nor all aware
By whom the greeting given, yet joyed as he
Who from strange lands returned his native air
Feels on his cheek once more, and joys to see
Sights to old days familiar once, that bring
Past thoughts, past loves, in act again to be.
Then from the midmost of that honoured ring
Came forward three, in form distinct and vast,

[1] Cf. *Divina Commedia*, Purg. iii. 10.

But kinglike each, or little less than king.
And one, the stateliest of the band, whose breast
With heavy folds of twisted gold was hung,
Foremost advanced to me his speech addressed.
Gentle his words as from a honeyed tongue
To courteous utterance framed; but cold his eye
As night's keen star the leafless boughs among.
And thus; "To perilous lordship destiny
Twice lent my name; even now hast thou beheld
The second Cromwell; know the first in me.
The despot will that at a breath dispelled
Rome's secular fabric, that nor creed nor law
But its own self avowed, I captive held
Chained by my stronger purpose, bent to draw
All to itself, as whirlpools draw the tide
That makes them, to their all-devouring maw.
Nor gracious youth, nor reverend age, nor pride
Of high descent, nor pity's oft-urged plea
Might my keen axe-edge blunt or turn aside.
Alone of that dark breast I kept the key
Where dwelt the stores of kingly power, the will
That life or death assigned with like decree,
Potent for good, omnipotent for ill.
Long years my charge I held, nor faltered, sure
In all my Master's dictates to fulfil.
But he, now absolute grown, through me secure
Where erst he feared, the load of thankfulness
His trustless heart no longer might endure.
So sweet to bitter turned by sweet's excess;
And my true good transformed by his false mind
To crime than which all other crime was less.
Wheat-sheaves from tare-sown fields shall reapers bind,
Lilies on thorns, on brambles grapes shall grow
Ere a king's slave a grateful king shall find."
Pausing, his hand across a furrowed brow
He passed, as who would brush from memory's glass

Of some ill shapes the yet too present show.
Then said; "Heaven's work abides, earth's pageants pass;
The good remains, the ill dissolves away
As clouds from skies, or shadows off the grass.
Not all for thee, false Henry, was the day
Of the great things I wrought; nor shall thy stain
Sully the gold of England's orient ray.
As some fierce storm from off the stagnant plain
Impetuous drives the marsh-sprung pest, afar
Blown by the gale, outwashed by the wild rain,
Such was my course; the remnant ills of war
Like heaped-up corpses left; the festering wrong
Of ease misused, and custom's leaden bar,
These from the land I swept; the prostrate throng
Felt in my storm their healing; to my name
A despot's hate, a nation's thanks belong."
Again he paused; and I; "Of praise and blame
Much hast thou earned, O Cromwell! but the gold
Wastes not, though sharp the test, and fierce the flame."
"Enough;" he smiled and answered; "now behold,
Conjoint to my expectant hour, the twain
Worthiest with me in honour's text enrolled.
He[1] on my right who from Amasia's plain
Called to Byzantium's towers, with pitiless sword
Yet pitying, cleft the links of the dull chain
By licensed greed and old corruption's horde
Coiled round the giant limbs of Othman's brood,
And youth for age, and praise for shame restored.
And Küprili's name broad-writ in lines of blood
Glows like the beacon-fire that crowns the height
To guide the Crescent bark through storm and flood.
But he the third thou seest in equal light
Of statesman-radiance robed, alone upbore

[1] The elder Küprili, Grand Vizier of Mahomet IV.: sometimes styled the Richelieu of Turkey.

"A falling empire's weight, so deem aright.
Iyeyas[1] he, who by fair Biwa's shore
Victor of trait'rous wrong and civil broil,
All negligent pride and careless ease forbore,
And helmed him to long years of healsome toil
Till firm the fabric rose, no more as erst
To foreign greed and rival schemes a spoil.
Mightiest and noblest heart of those inhearsed
'Mid Shiba's shrines, or Nikho's cypress grove;
Hero of later days, yet with the first
Writ by Japan in lines of grateful love."

[1] First of the Japanese war-ministers.

CANTO XVIII

The folly of selfish Ambition—We now enter the region of demagogues and popular orators; a desolate flat, over which the spirits are driven by an unceasing wind—My guide points out first Pericles, whose policy ruined Athens, then Cleon, the Roman Tribunes, the Gracchi, Marius, Cinna, and Rienzi—Modern demagogues follow—Warning to England against such leaders, and republican ideas imported from France or the United States—The ill consequences of Columbus's discoveries.

O FOOLISH cares of men! O toilsome days
  Idly bestowed! O labour run to waste,
Success by failure crossed, and cancelled praise!
As on loose ground a goodly temple based,
  Or mine where ore is none, deep-hewn in vain,
Or sea-side footsteps by the tide erased;
Such is their guerdon who with hand and brain
  For self not others toil, though high the deed,
With dross for gold repaid, and chaff for grain;
Empty the ears; like harvest from like seed.
  They only self attain who self forgo,
All lost well lost for love's sufficient meed.
But worst for those who by the harlot show
  Of popular favour lured, and patriot's name,
On the base crowd ingrate their toil bestow.
And long must ages roll ere the pure flame

Of love those dregs consume, and the soiled ghost
Pure through the gates return whence first it came.
As Autumn flowers pinched by untimely frost
Shrivelled and wan drop from their blighted stems
Drenched with the night's cold dews, a death-stricken host,
So from the gay greenwood that circling hems
The space to those great spirits assigned, who wait,
Cleansed of earth's soil, love's faultless diadems,
Forth as we passed with thoughtful steps sedate
Changed all that cheerful scene to sombre hue
That even remembered irks me to relate.
As mixed with sand and weed-rack pebbles strew
Some torrent's path now dry, so was the ground,
O'er which a bitter wind unceasing blew.
And here and there a stunted thorn had bound
Its prickly network cross the path, and lay
Light bones and broken shards the fields around.
But there like ghosts that foiled of purpose stray
Yet may not rest or pause, dim forms of men
Chasing or chased, so seemed, fled down the way:
As flit the marsh-fires o'er the putrid fen
So went they, singly some, some trooped in bands
Causeless, that sundered oft, then joined again.
But rest or term was none; thorn-strewn the sands
Denied repose; and still the gusty wind
Drove those weak forms along the desolate strands.
And some lamenting went of friends unkind
And treacherous wrong; and some like men distraught
Ceaselessly called on others left behind.
And others veiled from their own selves in thought
Silent were driven by sand and thorn; but all
Ever by that cold wind were forward raught.
As birds at random blown by the wild squall
Precursor of the storm, now here now there
Screaming are whirled by cottage roof and wall,

So showed those forms that through the dusty air
Confused the sight: I stood, and wondering gazed
If aught the untold meaning might declare.
Then spoke my brother-guide; "Why thus amazed
Behold'st thou these? or have new-visioned things
So soon earth's records from thy mind erased?
They whom the popular breath on its light wings,
Lighter themselves, to faction's heights upbore
Here find what fitting meed such headship brings.
Foremost his form[1] behold who first of yore
Led the vain babblers when th' Athenian crowd
Clutched at the helm, disdainful of the oar;
Till with riven mast, torn sail, and tangled shroud
Helpless the vessel lay, and o'er her broke
In whelming storm the Macedonian cloud.
In freedom's borrowed name he bound the yoke
Of popular will supreme on the fair land
By Pallas cloven with th' olive-bearing stroke;[2]
And lit with vain self-trust the wasteful brand
For thirty years[3] unquenched, till Graecia's pride,
Ashes and blood, bestained the Thracian strand.[4]
Close in his train the demagogue herd, allied
In lust of gain or power, attend their chief,
Cleon, and viler names to fame denied.
All these as restless whirls the withered leaf
Wind-driven across the road, are borne along
Till penal years outworn allow relief.
When renovated Greece from secular wrong
Rescued by noble deeds resumes the wreath
Of art, the wand of thought, the lyre of song,
Then, nor till then, shall the due term bequeath

[1] Pericles.

[2] In the mythical contest between Poseidon and Pallas she called forth the olive in Athens.

[3] The Peloponnesian war.

[4] The battle at Arginusae.

"Their life to second birth, once more to tread
Hymettus' slopes, Athenian air to breathe.
So death resumes the living, life the dead,
Sunset revolves to sunrise, even to morn,
Till the great noon its changeless radiance shed."
Thus spoke my guide, nor more, whilst onward borne
By the rash wind those phantoms passed away,
As shadow-waves pass o'er the breeze-swept corn.
Next fiercer sounds I heard, cries of dismay,
And plainings loud with curses mixed, that seemed
To darken more the gloom of that sad day;
Till swift of a new throng the vanguard gleamed
In double headship, while the following crew
Like a mad comet's train confusedly streamed.
And a voice called aloud, "What guerdon due
To patriot-feigned sedition? what reward
For those who first rebellion's trumpet blew?"
Deafened, alarmed, to my dear guide and lord
Closer I drew; but he, "Behold the first
Who dyed in Roman blood the Roman sword.
The Gracchi these, names to all time accursed;
With them the progeny of their crime, the race
In base intrigue and poisonous treason versed;
And wolfish Marius, and the dog-like face
Of shameless Cinna; till Rome's violate State
Veiled in a despot's rule her worse disgrace.
And, following, the vain man,[1] the fool of fate,
Last of the Tribunes idly called, for he
Was but the bastard of a lesser date.
All these and many more in days to be,
Courtiers of popular headship, who for hire
To the mob idol bend a servile knee."
So forth the tumult swept, in mixed attire
Of various climes the witness, voices blent
In jarring resonance, sounds of plaint or ire;

[1] Cola di Rienzi.

Orderless all, confused, dishonoured, went
Wrecks of the turbid flood their art availed
To loose, not bind, by their own triumph shent.[1]
Those too who by brute force or fraud assailed
Europe's ill-soldered thrones I saw, till last
Weakness o'er weakness, dwarves o'er dwarves prevailed.
So Bourbon's rotten stem to earth was cast;
So Spain's ill-nurtured seedlings on the coast
Of far Atlantis[2] laid in lawless waste.
O blight of earth's late harvest! deadliest most
Where fairest promise bloomed! all honoured worth
Fades at thy blast, in popular vileness lost.
O England! O my country! thou whose birth
To Greece, to Rome, a nobler sister gave,
Empress of nations, crown of the whole earth,
Treasure-house moated by the jealous wave,
Thou that wave's mistress; rivals at thy feet
Now crouch in fear, now in vain envy rave;
Happy for thee if thy time-guarded seat
From outer foes exempt, thou keep'st secure
From Judas-patriots, and base faction's cheat.
Too well thou know'st of old the brood impure
Of democrat France, or that new-fangled world[2]
Where chartered greed most flaunts her tawdry lure.
Ill-starred the hour when Genoa's chief unfurled
The Westward bellying canvass, better then
By thwarting winds on rock and shipwreck hurled,
Nor back returned a worse Pandora train
To Europe's new Prometheus brought, with ills
Unknown, unguessed, vexing the lives of men.
Not she in scarlet robed on Latian hills,
As Patmos' dreamer tells, a harlot queen,
With worser draught her witchcraft's goblet fills.
Drink they who list, and to the horde unclean

[1] Shamed.
[2] America, North and South.

Unbar the gates of power, and 'mid the shrine
Of worshipped worth enthrone a form obscene.
Bestial themselves they boast a bestial line
Fathered of apes, not men; such madness waits
Who earthly rule dissociate from divine.
At this such glare as from the furnace gates
Of Hiera[1] bursts or Aetna, when the night
Unbinds the storm-fiend of Trinacria's[2] straits,
So reddened skies and plain with angry light
To th' unknown voice thus heard, whose threat'ning sound
In crimson fire transformed itself to sight;
Like aspens of the breeze-swept vale the ground
Quivered beneath, the storm-wrapped heavens above;
Then stilled, as in new splendour closed around,
Now near, th' all-healing wings of pardoning Love.

[1] One of the Lipari islands, north of Sicily.
[2] Sicily.

CANTO XIX

We pass to a calm sea-shore, and see Hannibal—My guide tells him of my own early admiration for him—He welcomes us, and calls up his past life in a series of visions—His greatness survives the ruin of Carthage.

THE light unveiled, to which a tenfold sun
Had seemed a fire-fly spark, the wind-drove band
Of flitting ghosts, the tempest, all were gone;
And as in some wide bay the slanted sand
Washed by the refluent tide no trace retain,[1]
Void of all these before us lay the land.
But with thick grass and reed o'ergrown the plain
Circled the mountain base; and far in view
Spread the bare bosom of the heaving main.
Still was the tempered air; no storm-blast blew
Thwart the clear vault, nor cloud nor speck was there,
Blue canopy to the ocean's waveless blue.
But 'twixt the meadowed slope and sandflats bare
Rose a low wall, as where a drifting waste
With near encroachment threats an orchard square.
By a smooth path the midmost way was crossed,
Where as the Master led I followed slow,
Silent, and in the realm of ghosts a ghost.

[1] *Sic* MSS.

Then was I ware of one with downcast brow
Propped on his hand, who speechless sat and lone
By the wall-side the narrow slope below.
A warrior shape in burnished steel he shone
But light the figured cuirass-guard, and light
The plumeless helm, and light the baldric's zone.
As the hot blackness of a sultry night
Flickers with sheeted fire, uncertain gleamed
In his dark eyes half-closed a dangerous light.
Of southern climes and Libyan suns he seemed,
Panther-like crouched, the path beside; in rest
Restless; I knew not if he waked or dreamed.
Like one who sees but marks not, though the guest
Stand in the open door, nor sign nor word
Of welcome gives, with inner thought oppressed,
So to the greeting by our speech preferred
No answer made that form, as who distraught
From unknown lips some foreign sound has heard.
Then, roused to speech: "By what new ordinance brought
Passed ye the circling bounds? and, if the way
Self-taught ye know, why else enquire ye aught?"
To whom my guide; "That which all worlds obey
Or thine, or ours, or other, bid me change
For your brief twilight life's eternal day.
But he thou seest companion of my range
Is one whom from thy being, close linked with mine,
Nor sundering space nor time could all divide.
As the slant reflex of the ocean brine
Presents in nearness on the mirrored rim
Some distant star, so history's oft-conned line
Thee first, Hamilcar's son, revealed to him
In worshipped likeness; to his eyes thy rays
Shone in full orb, where faint all else and dim."
Not from a rain-dark cloud more dazzling blaze
Declares the sun's return, than at the word

Transfigured beamed the pride of Byrsa's [1] days,
And cried; "O welcome thou, my strength, my lord!
O happy hour! O long deferred embrace
Of spirit with spirit, death sundered, life restored!"
Then thus to me; "Of distant land and race,
Yet near in higher kin, brother, to thee
Be given a brother's welcome, face to face.
No common chance, no vulgar destiny
Assigned thy hither-ward way, not hence to part
Till plucked the fruit from truth's slow-ripening tree.
The spell in by-gone days o'er mind and heart
Cast by my name I thus renew: the dead
For thee revive, for thee re-act their part."
Even as he spoke, thick gathered round my head
A mist that hid the landscape round, and then
Parted to visioned scenes that came or sped.
And first a shrine I saw, with panoplied men
Close thronged, and 'midst a child: his hand was laid
As on an altar's marge: I looked again
And knew the face, and heard the words he said
Of hatred to his country's foes: the vow
Long years in blood fulfilled, in blood repaid.
Crimson the fire-light gleamed on cheek and brow,
But star-like pure the childish eyes; their glance
Summed the sworn future in an absolute Now.
This soon was gone; and widened on my trance
A desolate height, where o'er the incrusted ice
Ghost-like the snow-wreaths whirled their dizzying dance.
And a long train, various in war's device,
Slow-winding clomb the slope, with bleeding feet
Upcrowding to the barriered precipice.
Each on his comrade gazed, aghast to meet
That face, the glass of his own thought, till fear
Grew to despair, ill-counsellor of retreat.
Then rose that Leader's voice in accents clear,

[1] Carthage.

And, "Forward" cried; "across these heights is Rome,
Rival and spoil:" nor more was then to hear
For splintering rocks and crash of arms, while clomb
The dusky war-files to the crest, as pass
Dark lines of tempest thwart tossed ocean's foam.
Next a wide plain, dark-grown with tufted grass,
Spread to my view, where lost in reedy sedge
Half-hidden waters fed the black morass.
But red to sight was by each swampy ledge
The trampled ooze, and ruddy streamlets flowed
Through field and mud-bank to th' horizon's edge.
Upwards I looked, if chance the sunset glowed
In western heavens diffused with crimson stain
That in reflex such ghastly semblance showed.
But grey the silent eve, with autumn rain
Dim-streaked in slanting bars, and faint the day
Narrowed in colourless close o'er stream and plain:
And grass and reeds amidst in plashes lay
The blood of slaughtered men: with curdling blood
Mantled the sluggish pools, the shallow bay.
There, girt with death and conquest, midmost stood
He, the dread Chief, who late from Alpine snow
Poured, at his vow's behest, war's pityless flood.
Thrice victor now, by Trebia's torrent flow
And Thrasimene's banks, till Cannae's field
Heaped up the slaughter-pyre of that great vow,
When shivered was Rome's sword, and cloven her shield
With deadliest-seeming blows, and even the war,
A harvest reaped, no further sheaves might yield.
There stayed the forward tide, there Libya's star
Faded, and from the o'er-confident leader fled
Neglected Victory's unreturning car.
Again I looked: Numantia's sands were red
With her own children's gore, and, gorged his fill,
On Libyan flesh the Libyan vulture fed.
Vain now th' impetuous onset, vain the skill

Taught by long use, the stubborn courage vain;
Fixed the decree, remediless the ill.
But he, the lion of Afric's fervid plain,
Whom chance nor death could daunt not, nor the might
Of fate subdue, nor fortune bind in chain,
Though set, hopeless of morn, in Zama's night
That sun, for twenty years with victory's ray
Made one, untired resumed his country's fight.
By wise restraint and toil that brooks delay
Rebuilding Byrsa's ruins, with slow reform
Her prostrate walls upraising day by day.
Vain hope, vain labour all: the Roman storm
That snapped the central stem, relentless yet
Swept on, nor gave to rise the prostrate form.
Withered in earth the root, the branches wet
With poisonous dews that kill; Phoenicia's place
Knew it no more, past memory, past regret.
Yet he like some lone watch-tower round whose base
All night the eddying waters clash, till day
Nought but expanse unbroken now displays,
So stood Numidia's chief, then passed away
In darkness from the land unworthy grown
Of such as he, left to her own decay.
In foreign lands to childhood's thought unknown,
Where native accents none to soothe the ear
Nor native sights the eye, banished, alone;
By an ungrateful country's cruel fear
Driven forth, he sits an Asian Despot's guest
'Mid dim neglect, and base barbarian sneer.
Nor triumph now nor fame, but only rest
He seeks, yet finds not, though the sundering clime
Had baffled all but Rome's relentless quest.
He knew, nor vainly strove, but calm to time
Bequeathed th' imperfect vow, the vengeance slow
That on a nation wreaks a nation's crime.

"Here be the end; the gods have willed it so;
To them not Rome I yield; my task is o'er;
And a great Shade to the great Shades I go."
He spoke, and quaffed; the footsteps at the door
Close on the threshold paused; not this they sought,
Feared in his life, in death they feared him more.
Then as the passing of a dreamer's thought
By some sharp sound dispelled, this vision too
Passed, but remained the truth by shadows taught.
In Byrsa's port no more the seaman crew
Unload their merchant bales, no more its sands
Shall high-towered empire on those mounds renew.
Faded the very memory from the lands
Made by that memory famous, now the prey
Of Arab hordes and Gallia's meaner bands.
But thou, great Spirit, in truth's eternal day
Eterne, hast reared thy glory's monument
From earth's dishonour safe, from time's decay.
Lord of the high resolve, the stern intent
That life and self disdains; lord of the throne
Starlike amid the starry element.
One be my lot with thine, one mantle thrown
Round us in earth's dim ways, one sphere above;
That sphere where reigns in all, yet reigns alone
One common Lord, one Guide, one Trust, one Love.

CANTO XX

The Second Region: Fine Art; approached by a gateway over which appears the mystic Flower, before seen—We enter the region of Architects—Vision of Egypt and her great monuments, and of the first Architect, who was Builder of the Palace at Thebes.

SEVEN voices from the cloud-veiled summit call,
Seven paths, to each a guide, lead up the slope,
Seven portals welcome to the mystic hall;
Hopeful each voice, each entry scrolled with hope,
With hope each pathway bordered; blank and mute
Is the eighth access to the ultimate cope;
But this I saw not yet nor knew; my foot
Now trod the second path that Eastward still
Wound 'twixt the ocean shore and mountain root.
For now the lustral realm where the first ill
Works its own cure, and loftiest aims attain
The prize oft sought by failure, as the rill
Long vexed in mazes finds at last the main,
Behind us lay; nor till th' appointed time
Of earth fulfilled, might I those heights regain.
O welcome hour, expected long, the chime
Of destiny's peal, that bids th' earth-weary ghost
Change for unsullied light this fog-girt slime!
As one who wind-bound long from some fair coast

Loosens the sail, half glad new scenes to try,
Half grieving o'er dear things in distance lost,
Even so, distraught 'twixt pain and joy was I;
Joy to behold the further realms, and pain
From those great spirits to sunder company.
But fate compelled me, and th' invisible chain
From birth to death twined round our ways, each one
Drew my steps onward from their rest again.
The kinsman form of Byrsa's lonely son,
The wind-blown patriot troop, the statesman band,
The laurelled lords of conquest, all were gone.
By the wet margin of the shingly strand
We passed, a silent pair; the sea's bright glass
Glittered to right, and left-ward was the land.
And now two little hills with wavy grass
Green from their lowest base before us stood,
Narrowing the pathway to a middle pass.
On either summit high a clustered wood
Of laurel, mixed with growth of various leaf
Intricate, made a forest solitude,
Where never curious foot of man, the thief
Of Nature's stores and treasured loveliness
Might come, nor laughter coarse, nor plaining grief.
But some coy Oread [1] scaped the rude caress
Of all too eager Hermes, here might dwell,
And tend her flowers, and weave her fragrant tress.
There a fair gateway spanned the narrow dell
With its white arch of chiselled marble, wrought
To shapes in beauty indescribable;
No lovelier shows by visitant angels brought
To the young priestess, when within the fane
Alone she worships, earth and self forgot.
And living sparklets like the sprinkled rain
Of sunrise, a thin veil of atom light,

[1] Mountain Nymph.

Flashed through those shapes, and passed, and flashed again.
But o'er and through the gateway's midmost height
A flower, in form and hue all flowers of earth
Excelling, downward bent, a wondrous sight.
No terraced bowers adorned for moonlight mirth
Had reared that flower by Belus' palaces,
Nor from Hesperian orchard-glades its birth.
But other suns and other dews than these,
The suns that set not, and the dews of May
Eternal, fed its living loveliness.
I looked and knew the charm that on my way
Up the dark gorge 'twixt dream and waking lost
Cast the strange magic of its Iris ray;
The same, but lovelier now; more bright the boast
Of changeful hues, statelier the wooing grace,
Then most intent when careless seeming most.
Balanced in air, as then, with downward face
My face it sought; and soft its scented breath
Drew me, as draws the lamp the insect's chase.
And now we stood the portal arch beneath,
Leader and led, where round the mystic flower
Clustered in emulous twine the marble wreath.
Then round us swept, but whence unknown, a power
Like a strong wave that lifts from off the sand
The bather's foot-hold in a dangerous hour;
Nor aught I saw, but felt the clasping hand
Of my true guide on mine, and heard the voice
That first spoke welcome to the spirit land.
And these the words, "Brother and friend, rejoice;
The realm of those who Nature, cast by man
In flawless mould, have made their earthly choice,
Now open lies before thee; rise and scan
What of the work abides by each in place
Accomplished, how fulfilled the god-like plan."
He said; and at his voice, as 'neath the trace

Of some skilled artist on the canvass bare
Comes out from mind to sense the pictured face,
So from the blankness of encircling air
A landscape clear in outline, steeped in light
Came forth, till seemed the thing itself was there.
For a broad river rolled its tawny might
'Twixt fields and rocks alternate; pillared fanes
Bordered the gliding highway left and right.
Beneath a changeless sky of clouds and rains
Unknowing, rose high walls, that seemed upreared
By recent hands, so free from rent or stain:[1]
And giant statues of old kings revered
By crouching slaves around their pedestals,
And records graven of cancelled days appeared.
And they, the pyramid twins, whose bulk appals
The gazer, till recoil both mind and eye
Back from th' incline of those heaven-piercing walls,
And these beyond, where th' ever-glowing sky
Canopies o'er the giant maze of stone
Where the first Egypt throned in majesty.
Gone now the courtier crowd, the armies gone
That thronged those halls, and gone the builder kings
Who reared them, gone their names, their deeds, their throne:
But 'mid the memories of those faded things
Unfading stands the palace monument,
Titanic birth of huge imaginings.
The lotus-flowering column; sculptures blent
Of bird and beast and man; the quaint design
Of multiple form with rainbow tints besprent;
The pointed spires, whose granite mirrors shine
Like crystal dykes in the sun; the porches' shade
Dark as the entry of some caverned mine.
Wondering, all these I passed amid, nor stayed
Till reached the Memnon brother-shapes, that sit

[1] *Sic* MSS.

Guarding the vale where their dead selves are laid:
Now reft of voice, yet more in silence fit
To sentinel silent death, where buried lies
An empire's dust, apportioned to the pit.
Nor the sole guardians they; with woman-eyes
Earnest, and lips half-parted, watches ever
The Theban mystery,[1] couched in lion guise.
And there, 'twixt those great statues and the river,
Bare to the waist a dusky form up-grew
Where the hot air-streams o'er the sandhills quiver.
A scroll his knees up-bore; but fixed his view
Rested on the great shafts of Karnak's pile
As one who from old time their purport knew.
Serious his aspect; yet a patient smile
Parted his lips, and bright his steadfast eye
Shone to the mirror of the flashing hill.
Of us no heed he took, nor moved, till nigh
Approaching spoke my guide; "O thou, whose art
Creative, forecast of eternity,
First to the inmost thought of Nature's heart
Gave form and substance; till with joy she saw
Through thee revealed to man her nobler part,
And the hid life from sight by uniform law
Dark-veiled, through thee discovered clear and given
To form, its own incorporate presence saw;
By thee of mortals first the screen was riven
That beauty's truth from man concealed, and earth
By thee transformed was sister made to heaven.
Father of art! from thee the Pallas birth
Burst in the fullness of the powers above
Goddess and queen; yet in her queenliest worth
Vassal and handmaid to th' archetypal Love."

[1] The Sphinx.

CANTO XXI

The range of Architecture—Vision of the Palaces and Temples of Thebes in their original splendour—Greatness of Egypt—Vision of the land, past and present—The Three Lamps of Architecture: Beauty, Strength, Truth—The Architect recounts the rise and progress of the Art; in Greece and the Empire from Britain to Africa, and throughout Europe—I lament its present non-existence; he answers that the Art is now lost.

LIKE one who home from far returned to trace
Ancestral memories, finds in hall or shrine
Graven the rude likeness of some kinsman face,
And seeing thinks, "And was this semblance thine,
First of my race? the features these? the frame
This? through long-herited birthright moulding mine."
So gazed I on that man to storied fame
Unknown, yet of such record worthier far
Than many a sworded, many a sceptred name.
They rear, they ruin, they make, they mend, they mar,
But slight their crumbling work and narrow, pent
'Mid close-drawn bounds of time, and regioned bar.
Stars of the night, to each his hour is lent;
Then the dark marge: but thine the lamp of dawn
Firstborn and herald of day's firmament;
From where Ilyssus threads the thymy lawn

To Tiber's yellow waves, and the far lands
'Neath cold Arcturus' sluggish wheels withdrawn.
Then mind to mind made answer; hands with hands
Linked through the ages wrought, and heart to heart
Spoke what who hears obeys, not understands.
But he, that primal spirit, from these apart
In his first greatness dwells, a nameless king
Of the hid depths where Nature links with Art.
Then as to wakening eyes, brushed by the wing
Of sleep too sudden scared, in form and hue
Tremulous awhile welters each new-seen thing,
So gradual on my sight the vision grew,
Confused at first, till gathering outlines wrought
What seemed a kingly palace reared in view.
Ruddy the stone from sad Syene brought
Gleamed to the sun; within, each chamber wall
Was bright with countless shapes of pictured thought
Beyond the pillared ranges of the hall
Sat one, the warrior king, whose sculptured sneer
On Syrian rocks yet flouts the vanquished thrall.[1]
Without were horse and chariot, sword and spear
The living might of Egypt, on their lord
Intent; his smile their hope, his frown their fear
No lure of merchant gain great Egypt's sword
Unsheathed, no phantom vain of despot mood
Nor fitful crowd, nor faction's hasty word.
But in the mirror of her fountless flood
In yearly change unchanged, from ebb to flow
Imaged her own eternity she viewed.
Land of the mountain cairns stone-piled, that show
Life deathless made through death; hers the vast maze
Where Moeris'[2] prisoned waters coil and flow.

[1] Sesostris of Egypt, said to have conquered Syria, and set up there inscriptions and emblems denoting his victory over effeminate races.

[2] A lake near Memphis.

And where on Phylae's roofs th' unslanted rays
Of heaven's sign-guided chariot, downward poured
Year after year renew their shadowless blaze;
To where 'mid clustered palm and granaries stored
Wind the seven rivers of the guarded plain
From towered Canopus to the Syrian ford.
But on the granite floor of that wide fane
Lay slumbrous forms of sages, warriors, kings,
Thick-strewn as corn beat down by summer rain.
And all around piled heaps of shattered things,
Dead emblems of dead mysteries there I knew,
Fragments of orbs, and crowns, and arms, and wings.
Intent in thought I stood, till on my view
Again arose his shape who first the dream
Of artist-thought to tangible being drew.
Before the inmost shrine where the hid stream
Of life wells ceaseless up he stood, and high
Three star-like cressets o'er him cast their gleam.
Blent, yet distinct they shone; the dazzled eye
Now one, now three, made reckoning; so the light
Wove of three hues one singular brilliancy.
Pure the first lamp of silver radiance bright
Perfect in beauty shone; not fairer shines
Full-orbed heaven's queen in summer's calmest night.
The next with ruddier fire than decks the lines
Of Hesper's cloud-built palace glowed; its ray
Told of a power that wanes not nor declines.
Clear sapphire shone the third; the azure day
That vaults the frozen mountain-tops at noon
Compared with this were blotted mist and grey.
Three, yet a single fire the cressets shone,
As though a rain-bow should its banded chain
Of separate tints retwisting blend in one.
Now diamond white, now red with ruby stain,
Now hyaline all the temple glowed; and now
Hueless that light that could each hue contain.

Full fell the triple splendour on the brow
Of that true priest, art's firstborn, heir, and sire,
As on Imaian[1] heights the sunrise glow.
Then towards my guide, who to that triple fire
His added radiance lent, he turned, and spoke
Words as of him who holds his heart's desire.
"On the dim earth in me the dawning broke,
Dawn not of earth nor of earth's heaven, outspread
Beyond the clustered stars and zodiac yoke.
Thee too, my lesser friend, I welcome, led
By him of both the lord, till the high goal
Is reached 'mid those who live, misnamed the dead.
Sown is the seed that to earth's farthest pole
Shall reach, a mighty tree, whose branching pride
Of various flowers entwines one perfect whole.
Truth, beauty, strength;—of these the power allied
That substance clothes on thought, and gives to man
Of Nature's wealth what Nature's self denied.
Here is their fount; from hence Art's rivers ran
Where 'mid the plain in Asian story famed
Ninus and Nimrod reared their giant plan;
Mighty, but all fantastic show, till tamed
By Dorian cunning to the perfect grace
Of the great shrine from Virgin Wisdom named.[2]
Then Westward rolled the stream, in breadth and space
Widening, as widened from the seven-fold hill
Rome's Empire, circling to a world's embrace;
From Britain's twilight halls and cloisters, till
Afric's once populous coast-fringe, where the wave
Broke on long wharf and palace-crested hill.
Or where Byzantium's sky-lit dome,[3] that gave
Judaea's fane, the boast of David's son,
A more than rival, vaults an empire's grave.

[1] Himalayan.

[2] The Parthenon, dedicated to Pallas.

[3] S. Sophia.

"Or where the lion-standards flaunt the sun
Reddened on Adria's shoals, and dome and tower
Rise like a faery mist from waters dun;[1]
Or where in sculptured grace the queenly flower,
Thy lily, France, emblazoned arch and wall
By many-pillared aisle, or buttressed tower.
Palaces, temples, tombs, memorials, all
Vaunts of a world whose dying children fain
From deathless thought would weave their marble pall;
Stone, but instinct with life; the builder's brain
Was the true mirror where the triplicate ray
Of strength, truth, beauty flashed to form again.
Theirs the firm life that shall not pass away
When names and kingdoms pass; known or unknown
From me, their common dawn, kindled their day."
He ceased; and I with thought perplexed, as one
Who listening, part accordant finds, and part
Not as he deemed, to question thus begun;
Saying, "If from th' eternal fount thy art
Was drawn, that to mere toil of structured stone
Beauty, and truth, and strength could thus impart,
Why now from earth withdrawn the power, that none
Can substance give to art's true thought? or build
Aught that may face unshamed the common sun?
Tame copyists all, to forge the likeness skilled,
Not to create; their work a scroll bereft
Of charactered worth, a promise unfulfilled.
Nor power, nor truth, nor grace, nor beauty left,
But mere reflex and semblance; barren death
Clothed with false tracement of life's borrowed weft?"
"Even so," that shape replied; "not twice the breath
Of heaven is breathed in man; not twice the Spring
Garlands the year, not twice the Summer's wreath.
They come, they pass; another year may bring
Fresh flowers, but not the same; the magic word

[1] Venice.

"Forgot; lost in the depths the master ring.
Vanished the polestar from heaven's chart, unheard
Amphion's builder strain; the delicate sheen
Once wove o'er earth's dull things stripped off and blurred.
Blighted the boughs reclothe[1] no second green;
The starless nights roll on, and bring no dawn;
Faded the lines from the many-diapered screen;
Till on another world another dawn[2]
Shall rise, and fresh from withered leaves' decay
Blooms a fair flower, an infant world new-born,
From morn to eve accomplishing its day;
So to their goal the onward ages move.
Till then death rules and spares not; to her sway
All things are subject but undying Love."

[1] *Resume* altered to *reclothe*, but the syntax uncorrected.
[2] *Sic* MSS.

CANTO XXII

My guide consoles me, and conducts to the Region of Painting—The Nile valley is replaced by the Val d'Arno—The Palace of Painting and its Gallery of works of all times—Pagan mythology, Classical subjects, Biblical and Christian, History, Landscape—A summary of all Art—My guide explains the excellence of Painting, especially the Italian Schools.

THE voice that by Siloah's gates at even
O'erdarkening gloom with gloom, to Israel told
Captive the ark, the standard soiled and riven,
Stabbed with no deadlier wound the pontiff old,
Than me his utterance who earth's bloom foretaught
Fated to dust, its fires to ashes cold.
Inly I mourned, "In vain the gift was brought
Mockery of dying men, so soon withdrawn
A cancelled boon, now all, now less than nought."
"Grieve not," then thus my guide, "the brightest morn
Is child of darkest night; the destined Spring
Bides hopeful 'neath snow-sheeted Winter's lawn.
Now lift thy eyes to yon fair plain, where fling
High walls and towers an outlined shade, that tells
Of strength with beauty linked in golden ring,
By lilied fields, and violet-cushioned dells
And slopes with olive hoar, where Arno's stream

" Unlearns the chill of Falterona's wells.[1]
There with the memories girt of beauty's dream
The lords of beauty dwell, by just award
Robed in the brightness of love's artist gleam."
Like one who drowsy grown the wayside sward
A half-hour's couch has made, then starting knows
Far off the journey's bourne, nor brooks retard,
But nerves his stiffened limbs, and knits his brows,
Then to his way once more with quickened pace
Turns, nor to backward scenes a thought allows;
So from the visioned Nile of primal days,
Temples, and tombs, and marvels, to the abode
Of beauty wed with art I turned my ways.
Sun-gilded shone the grass, and white the road
By orchard-grove and portal fair, and white
Beneath our feet the marble pavement showed.
So on we passed till where in princely height
Tall marble walls, where niche or window none,
Closed in their jealous ward from outer sight.
Four-square within the cloistered silence, won
By a low-entranced door; and all around
Arch upon arch kept out the baffled sun.
With lilies white and red th' ingirdled ground
A flowery tapestry shone; the gallery tall
Was with close fret of lilied garden crowned.
Nor several rooms were there, nor portioned hall,
But a continuous interchange of hue
In pictured beauty ran from wall to wall.
Whate'er of ancient dreams or fancies new
Man's thought has imaged forth or hand designed
Was present there as in true life to view;
Angels, and saints, and godheads; forms assigned
To visioned spheres of faith's eternity;

[1] Dante describes the Arno (*Purg.* xiv. 16) as

Un fiumicel che nasce in Falterona—

"one of the highest of the Tuscan Apennines" (Dean Plumptre, *Commedia*, 1886).

Thought's bubbles, blown by hope with love combined.
These all, fair as bright cloudlets scattered high
O'er earliest summer morn, nor less than they
Fading to day's hot radiance, witched the eye.
They too, presentments of an earlier day
When shrined in stars, or founts, or branching trees,
Faith's gods or god-like powers made glad the way,
Sylvans and Oreads named, and Dryades,
And Jove, and Phoebus, and the presence fair
Of nymphs or Muses, lustrous images,
First-fruits of earth's first flowers, were figured there
Like tangled threads of light in changeful rays
From sun-lit pools cast on a marble stair.
Beauties unreal, yet real; fathomless maze
Of error-pictured truth; ill-bartered dreams
For waking blank of over-reasoning days.
And heroes here and gods, by Simois' stream
And Ida's pine-clad heights, or loftier snows
Of dread Olympus, Hellas' minstrel theme.
Nor less in imaged life those walls disclose
Th' all-wondrous pageant age by age unrolled
From earth's first shapement to its fiery close,
Fable, or truth; and Eden's pendulous gold,
The whelming seas, and where the shepherd sage
Saw the great sight by Midian's hill-girt fold;
Till broke the snare, and loosed the fowler's cage
By th' Erythraean shore and parted brine,
Portal and proem of a God-ruled age;
And the dread Mount, and Horeb's tempest shrine
In fire and darkness veiled, were pictured there,
And round the mountain base the warning line.
But these I passed, till shone in sequence fair
Crowned with the light nor change nor time can quell
Earth's loveliest Vision, sole beyond compare,
The Mother-Maid, th' Immaculate Miracle,
In perfect beauty throned; and next her One

Whose look was power, whose every word a spell,
A brightness robed in brightness, as the sun
Clad in a golden cloud; o'er shame and pain
Anguish and death He passed triumphant on.
And they his legioned followers, the long train
Of maids and matrons, manhood, age, and youth,
Came after, of that beauty rapt and fain.
And other sights were there, dread deeds of ruth
In war or tumult done, and bitter woes,
Faces with hate distort, and deeds uncouth;
And there were happy meadows; ordered rows
Of purple-clustered vines; with fruit the trees
O'erweighted, margined round each garden close;
Peace was the sunshine, peace the tepid breeze
That scarce disturbed the curl which lightest lay
On the stray maiden's neck; a world of peace;
And the green hills whence all the live-long day
Full-fed the summer rivulets sought the plain,
Stretched down to smooth sea-marge and shining bay.
There too smoke-pennoned peaks, and fiery rain
On blackened slopes, and icy crests of stone
Inviolate, that the eagle's wing disdain;
All that earth joys or fears from zone to zone,
All that earth's sons have suffered, been, or wrought,
All that earth's spirit-powers have woven in one,
These, and more else, from substance shaped by thought
To semblance more than substance true, were there
From farthest bounds together blent and brought.
As burns a magic fire in noontide air
Fed with rare gums, in many-coloured light
A living prism, so glowed each painted square.
Vision of visions! to my thrice-happy sight
Made plain in absolute beauty, form and limb,
Colour and shade, all fashioned to delight.
With beauty's wine upfilled from depth to brim
Was my heart's cup; for beauty's happiness

With tears of joy's excess my eyes were dim.
Nor conscious thought could now nor word express
The bliss through mind and sense diffused, as dwells
Liquid in crystal globes pure light's excess.
Bound and o'ermastered by th' entangling spells
I gazed, confused as he who waking hears
Round him the mingled chime of countless bells.
Then spoke my guide; "This shrine the sequent years,
Mirror of human life, in tints distilled
From human hearts, tempered with human tears,
With men's great deeds, great hopes, great woes have filled,
Till summed the perfect count by measured days
Determined, closed the book, the vision sealed.
Here dwell the royal spirits, whose view sublime
Ranged all earth's daedal scene, whose guided hand
Wrought in the might of life's creative prime.
They chiefest whom the loved Hesperian [1] land
Canopied o'er by heaven's best influence, fed
From breasts ambrosial, her own children band.
Theirs the great plain in chequered green outspread
From Alp to Adria; theirs the vineclad home
Tuscan or Umbrian, and the nameless Head [2]
That a world's headship owned, and named it Rome.
Nor absent they, though few, from colder skies
Gathered with these in Art's encircling dome.
All these abide thy question, to thy eyes
Manifest in their works; so rules the star
That on thy twilight bid such morn arise.
Enter; the veil is raised, withdrawn the bar,
Decked the high hall, full flowered the mystic grove;
Enter, an hour made one with those who are
Mirrors and mirrored in all-beauteous Love."

[1] Italy.

[2] The original name of Rome was regarded as a hidden mystery.

CANTO XXIII

I traverse the gallery—Vision of Giotto found by Cimabue—The Tuscan School appears in procession from Masaccio to Michelangelo.

With flagging sails, that to th' uncertain breeze
Scarce make response, the bark to calm resigned
Sleeps in the shadow of lake-margined trees;
Then quivering wakes, if so some brisker wind
Ruffles the darkened wave, and forward borne
Leaves the low shore and tethering stakes behind.
So at his word who from my being's morn
To fading eve had made my ways his care
Starting I roused me, with desire new born
More to behold; with earnest eyes the square,
Now bathed, so seemed, in noontide blaze, and glowing
With thousand hues, I questioned everywhere.
Like sunlit streams in liquid rainbows flowing
Glittered the galleried ranges, and between
From pier to pier, thin-tendrilled flowers up-growing
Waved in heaven's purest airs, a flickering screen;
But lone the place, nor down the cloistered shade
Was living form, nor on the central green.
Onward we went with measured steps, nor stayed

To separate wonder where the imaged skill
Scene after scene, form following form displayed.
I would have questioned oft my guide; but still
With steadfast face intent on things before
From range to range he passed, nor stayed my will.
Then as a spring-tide mist with curtain hoar
Mantles some willowed dell, a vapour rolled
In upward wreaths curled through the palace floor,
Till sense and thought, wrapped in that heavy fold,
Awhile were blurred, as blurred a seal that shows
With second impress crossed th' unhardened mould.
Thus while I stood perplexed, before me rose
Green slopes with pasture glad, and scattered sheep,
White as on April hills the remnant snows.
'Mid flowers of those that greet the morn, and steep
Their dyes in its pure beams, the slanted dales
Clomb from the valley to the crowning steep.
"Arno's mid course thou seest, of Tuscan vales,
And all are fair, the fairest, by the walls
Where blooms the garden of a hundred tales.[1]
Even there," thus spoke my guide, "the sunlight falls
On him the shepherd lad, the pride and crown
Of Florence most, and Padua's cloistered walls."
I looked; a boy beside, in braided gown
Stooped a thin form, as on the risen sun
A waning moon in earliest morn looks down.
"Through many orbs the changeful ages run,"
Added my guide; "but heaven's last gift, the art
That colour weds to shape, in him begun.
Giotto thou seest, like him of God's own heart
Chosen from the sheepfold, 'mid the monarch few
Who faithful found in either world have part.
Happy the hour that forth his footsteps drew
Who found the field-hid treasure; happier thou,
Thyself the priceless pearl revealed to view."

[1] The Poggio Gherardi, near Florence, where the *Decamerone* opens.

While thus he spoke, the elder Shade his brow
With gracious semblance raised, and said, "Behold
What to this hour succeeding years allow.
Linked with his name my name; the glories told
Shall blend with his my praise, but his the more,
Leader and pasturer of the Tuscan fold."
With that he pointed where in vapour hoar
Updrawn from Arno's stream the city lay,
Cherished of Mars, but of Dione[1] more.
There without peer, as for some festal day
Rises her handmaids 'midst a maiden queen,
Uprose the virginal tower,[2] art's Iris ray.
And marshalled from the opening gates were seen
In long procession stateliest forms, that moved
Crowned with red lilies woven with fadeless green.
And, "There are they by Love himself beloved,"
Thus spoke my guide, "whose work through toilful pain
Truth guided, thought perfected, time approved."
Then was I ware, circling that faultless fane,
Of countless shapes, all various, as in dreams
Pictured successive on a slumberer's brain.
And some were lovelier than the fabled themes
Of old Peneus' banks or Tempe's shades;
And some like spectres bred from Stygian streams.
But fewer these, nor much to sight displayed
'Mid those bright shapes thick as at evening close
The living lamps[3] that throng some Indian glade.
White lilies strewed their path, like new-fallen snows
On Pratomagno[4] at morn; and round them gleamed
Full-orbed the light earth dims not nor bestows.
As one who doubts if very fact, or dreamed
Long since what now he wakeful sees, I gazed

[1] *Dione*, mother to Aphrodite (*Iliad*, v. 370).
[2] Giotto's Tower, faced with coloured marbles. [3] Fire-flies.
[4] *Pratomagno*, part of the Apennine ridge in upper Val d'Arno (*Purg.* v. 116).

On one whose features not unknown I deemed.
But he with answering look his eyes upraised,
And said, "Thy thought I know; long since we met
In days not all from memory's page erased.
Spirit with spirit, mind with mind, ere yet
To utterance framed thy young desires, new born
That hour to life[1]; thou can'st not sure forget,
Hour when Masaccio's name, as on the dawn
The day-star risen, cast on thy heart the ray
Lightening the true to prize, the false to scorn.
My followers these, in whom Hesperia's day
Even to fulfilment's noon upgathered, shone
Art's zodiac belt, bright clasp of life's array.
Thou knewest not then, but now thou know'st, and known
Art by thy kinsfolk; look, nor lose the hour
That past returns not with returning sun.
He[2] who next me thou seest, the stainless flower
From her received, to whom high heaven assigned
A God for son, a riven heart for dower.
They too whose leaf smit by the parching wind
In tempest days breathed from the coming ill
Withered, but left a life-fraught seed behind,
Sandro,[3] and Della Porta,[3] and the skill
Of Ghirlandaio, master known of him[4]
On either summit throned of Phocia's hill."[5]
He ceased, and onward past; to memory's brim
My soul was filled; with inmost longings yearned
My heart, with happy tears my eyes were dim.
Aroused I cleared my view, and next discerned
Those at whose master spell the golden years
Of the young earth to the first spring returned.

[1] The writer first visited Florence as a child of thirteen.
[2] Angelico da Fiesole.
[3] Botticelli and Fra Bartolommeo (but the author seems to have meant L. Signorelli).
[4] Michelangelo, poet and painter.
[5] Parnassus.

Last in the train but loftiest, three; their peers
Out-towering, as the lesser Alps among
The snow-named Mount its triple crest uprears.
Awhile their steps they stayed, as whom the throng
Loitering, or converse brief, awhile detain,
Where with my guide I stood their path along.
Not lowlier bends, bowed down by Autumn rain
The garden's latest flower, than I my head
Abashed to earth declined, nor raised again,
Till by the voice made bold of him who led
Into all truth my steps, with lifted eyes
Clear I beheld what erst my vision fled.
But they like the great stars of midnight skies
Watchful of all, yet heedless seemed, nor aught
Of earthly care might to their heights arise.
Made lean by studious labour and deep thought
Was One,[1] with eager eyes that restless gleamed
Ever to find, yet ever further sought.
And One,[2] a Titan shape, by lightning seamed
Yet of the lightning lord, Climene's son [3]
Victor, unbound, fire-bearing, such he seemed.
A dew-washed rose, just opening to the sun,
A star new-risen in the pale Eastern screen,
A breasted swan, where waters purest run,
Are fair; but fairer He [4] the third was seen
Who 'mid those elders went; his boyish face
Upturned to heaven, more than that heaven serene.
Betwixt the twain austere, in youthful grace
Veiling his hidden strength, he firmly trod
The upward path with swift unfailing pace;
Named of God's angel, he an angel god
Late stooped to earth, early recalled above;
O Sanzio! thine the form an hour that stood
By mine, presentment of the invisible Love.

[1] Leonardo da Vinci.
[2] Michelangèlo.
[3] Prometheus.
[4] Raphael.

CANTO XXIV

Raphael describes his funeral in the Pantheon, and the subsequent decay of Painting—He explains the cause of this decline, the result of national and social decay—Michelangelo appears—The Sistine frescoes—He relates the fall and extinction of Faith and Art—Only a few true artists remain; and Art abides, although its works perish—A triumph of the true artists is seen.

"O THOU who yet, wrapped in the mortal veil
That grossly dims the sight, the grace hast won
To pass by paths unwont the spirit-pale,
In me behold the perfect gift to none
Before or after given, in me the doom
Quenching my light, as swift eclipse the sun.
Listen. In that famed temple-heart of Rome,
Where all the gods by all mankind revered
Circling have throned, wide gaped a new-made tomb;
And near it one, who in death's hour appeared
Not man but angel there, could angels die,
Was laid, a flower by frost untimely seared.
But o'er that lifeless form upreared on high,
Art's last best gift, in crowning loveliness
Transfigured shone the manifest Deity.
Smiling the face, upraised the hands to bless,
But not for earth that smile; a god's farewell

"Was in that blessing, a lost last love's caress.
Then through the dome commingling with the swell
Of chaunted praise, deep sighs, and wailing pain
Led up the world-wide dirge of Raphael.
For ne'er while Spring to Winter, sun to rain
Succeeds, to darkness day, to sadness joy,
Shall my lost beauty visit earth again.
But time and vandal rage, and worse alloy
Of care ill-sorted, of each remnant left
The tints shall mar, the virgin grace destroy.
And they, the servile crew, that haunt for theft
Art's jewelled shrine, not worship, rob the meed
Of truth and love, of love and truth bereft.
Unsheaved, unstored the harvest rots; with weed
O'er-run my garden's pride; the Summer past
Sad Autumn's blights and wintry frosts succeed.
O grief of griefs; even as my steps at last
The summit trod, even as my hand the prize
Grasped for its own, to void and failure cast."
He ceased, and all around the air with sighs
Was fraught; and as at eve a sheeted cloud,
Crept a chill shade o'er those warm imageries.
Silent awhile I hearkened, nor allowed
Utterance to thought, such reverence tied my tongue,
Till the strong passion framed my words aloud.
"O thou of painters chief, as first in song
Maeonia's bard![1] what spite, what doom unknown
Has wrought to art and thee such ruinous wrong?
Why dried the living fount, the flower out-blown,
Thought's fount, art's flower? the teeming mind, the skill,
Heaven's light, earth's beauty, vanished all and gone?"
Answered Urbino's pride; "From heaven the ill
Comes not by thee bewept, nor starry fate,

[1] Homer.

"Nor the sure cycles of th' eternal will,
But as the baser lives that darkling wait
In earth the vigorous growth of Summer's grove,
And in an hour destroy what years create;
So even from that which fosters beauty's love
Is bred what cankers love; and love destroyed
Destroys even that which erst itself could move.
With heaven's best gifts the sated sense is cloyed
Till heaven itself distasteful pales, and next
The central life is in life's heart destroyed;
Nought loved, nought honoured, nought believed; perplexed
The mind, withered the heart, the fountain dry
Or muddy, dark, heaven's beam no more reflects.
Lifeless the form, mindless the imagery,
Or vilely soiled, or vain with sordid jest,
Nature to foulness grown, and art a lie.
Out-roved the day for food, to evening rest
And callow young the bird comes back, to find
Nought but a rifled brood, an empty nest.
With desolate plaint to the ever-wailing wind
All night she answering sits, till morn returns
Blank as the daylight dawned upon blind eyes.
But less her loss than his, my loss, who mourns [1]
Love's wasted nest, of beauty's manifold brood
Empty and void, life's roses dwined to thorns."
Grieving I heard, and all that multitude
Grieved to my grief responsive; rocked the ground,
And the air darkened round us where we stood;
Till through that haggard shade there came a sound
As of great wings; and a strange light that seemed not
Of sun or moon or planet orbed us round.
In waking truth beheld, in slumber dreamed not,

[1] One MS. reads, *than mine, the hour that mourns*: the syntax has been here left imperfect.

Nor shadowy vision's mockery; but the truth
Is for the truth by baser minds esteemed not.
So be it; but he, the guardian of my youth,
Teacher and guide, has bid me sing the song,
Though unadorned the rhyme, and style uncouth.
For now, high rising 'mid the phantom throng
Stood forth that mighty spirit whom erst I knew
Archangel named, more than archangel strong.
Not he whose club Nemea's portent[1] slew
Could match that massive strength, nor statelier rose
Hyperion, noblest of the Titan crew.
And as from heaven's far depths in fiery shows
Flash forth fantastic lights that pass or stay
By Arctic seas, and Zembla's haunted snows,
So the vast visions[2] of mind's mightiest day,
The all-creative Power, the trumpet blast,
The Sibyl's spell, the Prophet's lightning ray,
And the dread hour that closes time in past,
Sealing o'er joy or woe th' eternal bar,
Half seen half lost were round that Presence cast.
But he as through night's fleeting clouds a star
Unmoved undimmed in steady radiance shines
From the still peace where things immortal are,
So calm so free from whatsoe'er confines
This narrow life of ours, Arezzo's boast[3]
Moved, as the sun goes up the belted signs.
Then, as at nightfall on some sea-beat coast
Heard the long breaker's roar, the accents came
Borne on the silence of that listening host.
"All that Time gives, all cunning work of fame,
All that earth girds in her many-woven zone,
Heaven's star-illumined vault, the central frame,
Shall fail with Time, a bubble-film outblown;

[1] The Nemean Lion, slain by Herakles.
[2] *Visions*, the frescoes of the Sistine Chapel.
[3] Michelangelo was born within the diocese of Arezzo.

"How then shall man's frail toil of pictured shade
Duration claim when substance' self is gone?
Even now from Sistine vaultings pass and fade
The hues that in one likeness God with man
Blended, and earth with heaven co-partner made.
Dim grow the angel splendours, faint and wan
Flicker the prophet-fires; and pale to see
She who earth's earliest blessing wrought and ban.
From his blurred throne th' avenging Deity
A rayless lightning sends; the dark despair
Of hell nine-circled sets its prisoners free.
Vanished as birds in depths of viewless air
The angel guard, th' attendant palms, the throne,
Vanished heaven's self, the meed of baffled prayer.
Blank the great mirror's face; the semblance gone
Faith pictured there and love; but love and faith
Fade not nor pass, eternal throned in One.
Nor time o'er these has power, nor chance, nor death,
Nor cyclic law nor starry course may claim
Entrance to their high realm for boon or scathe.
With them, clad with their splendour, crowned with fame,
Are those who on art's altar day by day
Have fed with faithful care Love's visible flame;
Whose patient steps have kept truth's difficult way,
Shunning the Demas pitfall of base gain,
Nor yet by passion's fool-fires lured astray.
These, though their earth-wrought works with earth again
To nought return, in their own strength abide,
Partners and kings in Love's unending reign.
In him their rest, their joy, their crown, their pride,
And her, whose mirrored form they worshipped long,
The beauty heaven unveils, Love's proper bride."
He ceased; and round him all that Tuscan throng
A jubilant answer gave; and evermore
Love, beauty, truth the burden of their song.
And, "Ours," they sang, "the pearl of price, the store

"From eyes unworthy hid; to us the clew
Is given, the pass-word taught, unbarred the door.
But few the heritors of our kingdom; few
Our rough-hewn path who tread, our bliss who prove:
And faint Art's altar-fires, and dim to view
In Europe's mists the Bethlehem star of Love."

CANTO XXV

A vision of Venice : her beauty and glory—Vision of the Embarkment of the expedition under Dandolo : and of the majesty of Venice—Her four great artists : Giorgione, Titian, Veronese, Tintoretto ; respectively representing her Beauty, Glory, Wealth, and Strength ; which survive in their works—Tintoretto's "Crucifixion"—The Spirit of Venice is eternal.

RAPT in the visioned joy by sound and sight
To sense presented there, I stood like one
Motionless struck and blind by sudden light,
Awhile forgetful of the task begun,
That through all secret dooms by Love upstored
Where time and space are not should lead me on.
Till he, my heaven's mid-star, my being's lord,
Whose ruddy gleam, of Southern night the gem,
Compassed my birth, my slackened will restored.
"Rouse thee," he said, "the nobler diadem
Forget not, the white throne ; the crowning flower
Thy journey's prize, blooms on a loftier stem ;
Nor all on these bestow th' allotted hour ;
For wide the further range, and more are they
Who wait thee where fulfilment perfects power."
He spoke ; I raised my eyes ; the fair array
Late seen, the Tuscan hills, the song, the glory
Heard or beheld, like dreams had passed away.
And Alpine peaks with secular winters hoary
Girt the far view, and from a waveless sea

Rose the grey wonder of Rialto's story.
The lion-wings, the sea-born City, she,
Merchant and warrior Queen, the jewel set
First in thy forehead's crown, loved Italy;
I knew the boatman's cry, the oozy net
Close by the marble rampart trailed, the sail
To the salt breeze 'mid dome and palace set;
Then most when at roused day-break Adria's gale
Ruffles the dull lagoon, and drives the haze
Thwart the wan waters and the star-light pale.
I knew the magic fretwork on the face
Wrought of a magic lake; the Nereid's dream
Outlasting age by age earth's waking days;
The lion-power, whose plumes with eagle gleam
Shone from the glacier-furrowed Alps afar
To the hot calm of Nilus' palm-fringed stream.
Here when all round was darkness else, in war
Of tyrants matched with tyrants, freedom's sway
In peaceful wisdom shone, a constant star;
Nor storms might veil nor demons quench that ray,
Though leagued with waves and tempests, and the roar
Of Genoa's thunder round Murano's bay.[1]
So firm the heaven-clasped Ducal bond, that more
Than bridal ring troth-plighted linked in one,
Venice, thy youth with Adria's surges hoar.
There high in whitening skies Hesperia's sun
With splendour filled the square, and porch and dome
In fivefold beauty held the treasures won
By venturous rapt from the mis-honoured tomb
'Mid Egypt's servile hordes, and glowed the sign
Last sunset splendour of imperial Rome;
When the long glories of the Ducal line
Centred in him[2] whose more than statesman sight

[1] Venice and Genoa were at war 1298-1381. The lines may refer to the fight in which Doge Andrea Contarini drove the Genoese from Chioggia and saved Venice.

[2] Dandolo.

Scanned the decrepitude of the Byzantine.
In age outworn, yet vigorous in the might
Of inmost youth; his on life's tremulous verge
The head to counsel, and the hand to smite.
Marshalled before, around him, as the surge
Circles a grey rock tower, a gathered crowd
Of warrior chiefs their motley squadrons urge.
So to the destined carcass clanging loud
The trooping vultures sweep; so swift so wide
Rises o'er heaven's still blue the Indian cloud.
Peasant and prince, the bridegroom from the bride
Sundered the morn, the sower from the sown,
The war-signed veteran there, the youth untried.
All that Venetia's clustered islets own,
All that her breezes fan, her streams infold,
All where her shadow slept or sunlight shone,
The high-born life in palace reared and gold,
The careful tradesman from his Asian wares,
The sturdy gondolier, the young, the old;
All these were gathered on the granite stairs
Down to the Sclavon wharf[1] where, ranged before,
Venetia's galleys wait Byzantium's heirs.
Then, as on wintry eve when frost is hoar,
To the still air upsteams a vaporous cloud
From the home-gathering kine, their pasture o'er,
While answering each to each with voices loud
The herdsmen cry, and ceaseless through the stall
Sound the vain lowings of the horned crowd;
So with a thin white mist from wall to wall
The square was filled, till lost to separate sight
Were chiefs and followers in that flickering pall.
But from th' infoldings of its nebulous light
Uprisen four mighty shapes came forth, to view
Like the four towers of Cairo's fortress height.
Of rainbow tints inwove with golden hue

[1] Riva de' Schiavoni.

Their garments shone, nor wholly each the same
Nor diverse yet, but to one kinship true.
There as they stood, the life, the pride, the name,
The city, the harbour, the terraqueous sway
Mirrored in them, one with themselves became;
Till all that subject was to time's decay
From those great shapes a cast-off raiment fell,
And left them bare in heaven's ethereal ray.
And Venice self transformed, so wrought the spell,
Made one with them, into their likeness passed,
Time's fairest dream, by Time unchangeable.
Beauty with power informed the first[1] had cast
Around his form; sun-like the second shone;
Gorgeous the third; of rugged strength the last.
Then spoke my guide; "Of fourfold strands in one
Was woven the thread to Venice erst assigned
By that which metes the courses of the sun.
Whate'er of grace adorns or form or mind,
Whate'er of beauty found in plain or hill,
Magic of dawn, of even, of cloud, of wind,
Her portion all were these; nor taint of ill
Might stain her fount of happy life, nor slime
Darken the marge of her clear-watered rill.
Hers the bright fullness of the vigorous time
When from the tomb-heaps of old Italy
Rose the new life, since choked in tears and crime.
To the strong Western breeze she lifted high
The flags of wealth and conquest, winged by fate
To farthest Asian shores and Eastern sky.
Her message these; the pomp, the pride of state,
The golden barge, the Ducal vest, the ring,
The crown of power bedecked her where she sate.
And all that trade could grasp or victory bring,
Or artist fancy mould, or luxury crave,
Clothed her, as clothed with meadow-flowers the Spring.

[1] Giorgione, Titian, Paolo Veronese, Tintoretto.

"But more than these the pliant strength that gave
To the fair form endurance, the hid might
Joyous as life, relentless as the grave.
So smooth, so gay the painted hide and bright
That clothes the woodland panther, but beneath
Th' unwearying nerves, the sinews tense for fight.
Queen of a thousand years, for her the wreath
Of beauty, splendour, power, on empire's brow
Wide as the skies above, the seas beneath.
Perished herself, in these she lives; and now
Giorgione's, Titian's art, Verona's Paul,
And he, the dyer's son who the great woe
That veiled the Man-God's countenance with the pall
Of ashen twilight could pourtray,[1] retain
What lesser powers could give not nor recall.
O sunset lines that fade not, but remain
A vanished sun's enduring monument
By the dim marge of th' Euganean plain!
And Brenta's high-swollen streams in fell consent
With Adria's surge may from her islets sweep
Tower, palace, dome, in sandy ruin blent,
And o'er what once was Venice, salt and deep
The recordless waves may weave their idle play;
A scroll effaced; her doom, a dreamless sleep;
But these are blazoned on th' eternal day
Of the true light that fades not, nor allows
Eve to its morn, or dimness to its ray.
Summed up the tale and told, the gilded prows
No more to victory cleave the deeps, and mourns
Widowed the sea-lord of his Istrian spouse,
Yet, Venice, lives thy spirit; thy beacon burns
To guide and welcome where wave-wearied rove
O'er Time's dark sea the wandering barks, by turns
Truants and pilgrims of th' abiding Love."

[1] The *Crucifixion* within the Scuola di San Rocco. Tintoretto has painted the glory round the Lord's head in grey.

CANTO XXVI

The Evening of earth is felt in the Spirit land—I see a vision of a stony plain—My guide rouses me, and we are in the region of Sculpture, where Michelangelo is throned as chief: last of the true sculptors—He shows me those of Pagan and Classical Art—Nearest him are Niccolo Pisano and Donatello—Other Italian sculptors—A vision of noble Sculpture, and the faith, greatness, or beauty it embodies—Classical and Christian subjects—The decay of Faith and Art.

Not here, where pulse of time was not, nor change
Had power to cheat the sense with varying show
Of morn or eve or seasons' motley range,
But on that mother earth to which I owe
This little breath, for nobler promise given
Than man-born blame can reach or praise bestow,
Passed had the sunlight veil from bashful even
That now with hundred starry eyes displayed
Looked forth from her high throne in cloudless heaven;
And all was still, save when through depths of shade
Some meteor sped, or to his distant mate
Called a lone night-bird from the wooded glade.
And I, though by Love's guiding power, with fate
Confederate, freed from time's successive chain
Awhile, yet felt the hour, a slumbrous weight
Laid on my eyes and soul, as on the brain

Some opiate broods, when sleep and waking share
O'er the half-conscious sense divided reign;
Till tower, and dome, and pictured diaper
Of wall, with the great forms to sight displayed
Quivered and faded as a dawn-trapped star;
And in their place an open field, o'erlaid
With shivered blocks that of Carrara's grain
Or Paros told, our doubtful footsteps stayed:
For pathway here was none, but through the plain
Great lines of shattered wall, and heaps of stone
Confusedly thrown, of purpose void and vain.
"Onward," then thus my guide, "the marvels shown
Of pictured Art, with Nature's self the skill
Coequal made, fair beauty's perfect throne,
Hast thou beheld; yet more remains, and ill
Should'st thou the portioned realm whose bounds enfold
Art's noblest sons, lords of the lustral hill,
Unheeded pass; nor any worthier hold
Than they who heaven-inspired, from brass or stone
Gave to invisible godhead human mould.
Conquerors of time their works abide; each one
Mirror to men, though worn and part defaced,
Of mind on which th' eternal beauty shone.
Strange that the work inanimate should outlast
The hand that made it and the heart that planned,
And Art abide where Nature flows to waste."
He ceased; I looked and saw where from the sand
Fresh springing flowers of wondrous form and hue
In starlike semblance spangled o'er the land.
And far as sight could reach the heaven's pale blue
Poured down diaphanous light, by flowers and ground
Upward in myriad rays returned anew.
Midmost the space, throned on a marble mound
Sat one[1] to sight well known; his furrowed brow

[1] Michelangelo.

Leaned on his hand, in deepest musings bound;
Like him who a sought goal has reached, and now
Finds him no nearer to the purposed aim,
And fain would further pass, yet knows not how.
Last of the demigods he, in whom the name,
Mightiest of names, was Truth; in him the scroll
Closed the great list of those whom earlier fame
Writ 'mid the gods or godlike: Round her pole
Earth circles, suns arise and set, the care
Of Nature weaves through parts her daedal whole;
But second or like to thee, Etruria's heir,
Nor suns revolved nor seasons bring; nor time
To earth relenting may that loss repair.
As one who journeying from far distant clime
Reverend some sacred relic guarded high
On the veiled shrine approaches, when the chime
Of the shrill-tinkling bell bids every eye
Behold, and every knee adoring bow,
And longs to approach, yet fears to venture nigh;
So, towards that Titan form and awful brow
Half drawn by longing, half by fear repelled
Was I, nor dared in words my thought t' avow.
But that great spirit in equal balance held
'Twixt proud reserve and pitiful tenderness,
With beckoning hand my forward step compelled,
Till by his side I stood; though steep, th' access
Gave footing firm and prospect to survey
The promised pageant of that last recess.
Before us all who to the earlier day
Of Egypt, Greece, or Rome in sculpture gave
Heirlooms of gladness, joy of ages; they
Who from ethereal heights or violet wave
Hermes or Aphrodite called, and drew
Oread or Satyr from the vine-clad cave,
Immortal made by mortals, in clear view
They and their works displayed, a shining band

To the great Master made obeisance due.
But chiefest two, sent from Etruria's land
Mother of noblest sons, approached the heights
Where Buonarotti throned; from Pisa's strand
The first[1]; as one to whom a sudden light
After long darkness shines yet dazzles not,
Such was his aspect, who the ugly night,
Of barbarous North and effete East begot,
Alone dispelled, and to fair Italy
Restored her beauty's heirloom long forgot,
Till the pure truth of Hellas' imagery
In grace recast the unsightly shapes, that erst
Imaged new worship to the Christian eye.
Second in time,[2] but mightier than the first
In craft and wile, thy vigorous beauty shone,
Art-flower of Florence, loved Donato, nursed
At Nature's breast, to studious manhood grown
Perfect in skill: the Martyr's warrior grace,[3]
And Jesse's champion son,[4] in brass or stone,
The children troops[4] of mimic song, the face
Furrowed with tears of penitent Magdalen,[5]
Judah's dread matron,[6] these in equal place
And many more beside, on earth again
'Twas thine to bring; so well thy art assigned
What best in men to gods, in gods to men.
In these complete the list; nor hand nor mind
Of lesser days to these can add; the shrine
Closed to the pilgrim, sealed the book and signed.
Then spoke my brother guide; "A power divine
Was on man's earth and is not; never more
Shall marble form or rainbow-tinted line
Their vanished gods to dying men restore;
Shivered the heaven-lent glass; the mirrored star

[1] Niccolo Pisano.
[2] Donatello.
[3] S. George at Or San Michele.
[4] In the Bargello Museum.
[5] In the Baptistery.
[6] In the Loggia de' Lanzi.

"Is but a memory of night's cancelled store.
But thou with sense freed from each limiting bar
Of time and cause look up, where yet displayed
In their own truth to thee the things that are."
Reverent I heard, nor to the voice delayed
Obedience due, and saw where o'er us bent
What seemed a crystal dome with forms pourtrayed,
Infinite, as the heaven's own element
Seen through Thaumantia's [1] iridescent bow,
And hyaline depths with vaporous splendour blent.
Olympus there, and Cretan Ida's snow,
And Sinai's crags, and Thabor's mystic hill,
And the cool heights whence Tiber's waters flow.
There too the lords of fight, whom that fair ill [2]
Of Greece and Troy the bane, from Hellas drew
To dye with hero blood Scamander's rill:
And there th' incarnate strength Jove-born,[3] who slew
Geryon with Lerna's pest; yet could not quell
The craft of Nessus; there the Centaur crew,
Boast of Athene's Phidian citadel; [4]
And they [5] through Euxine gates, unoped before,
Who sought on Colchian shores the golden fell;
And the famed wanderers on Aeaea's [6] shore
Awhile from fate reprieved; but fate's decree
For respite given has double ills in store.
All these, and more besides in like degree,
And with them some by beauty garlanded
With fadeless praise in love's eternity;
Hylas, and Hyacinthus, and the maid [7]
Too well by Phoebus loved; and whom thy wile,
Jealous Aurora, slew; Euboea's glade,

[1] Iris. [2] Helen. [3] Herakles.
[4] Sculptured in the metopes of the Parthenon.
[5] Iason and the Argonauts.
[6] *Aeaea*, a mythical island where Odysseus found Circe reigning.
[7] Daphne.

Procris, yet mourns thy fate; nor less the while,
Bent o'er th' eclipse of her love-worshipped sun,[1]
Grieves the Queen-goddess of Cythera's isle.
And with them shapes divine were seen, each one
In his own regioned birth-place; there with Jove
Hyperion throned, and blessed Mary's Son,
And the fair shapes of Tempe's haunted grove
Dryads, and Oreads, and with myrtle crowned
She, the rapt prophet[2] of the Cuman cove,
Dying yet deathless; and beside her frowned
The woe-denouncing seers of Syria's hills.
And some whose brows the aureole rays surround
Of saintdom, won from heaven through earth's worst ills,
Eremites, virgins, martyrs, and all those
In whom the eternal life its law fulfils,
From earth's vain misery brought to sure repose;
Bearers of truth's entrusted torch, whose flame
Unvexed, undimmed in mist and tempest glows.
Still burns that god-lit fire; but not the same
On earth its lustre; outward form no more
Mirrors to man the God of uttered name,
Pagan or Christian; vain the careful lore,
The transcript features vain; soul-less and cold
The mimicked art that would art's truth restore.
Then, as I gazed, upgathering fold on fold
Floated an earth-sprung mist, around, above;
Till like a landscape blurred, a tale out-told,
Vanished the pageant of incorporate Love.

[1] Adonis,—the Spring, here equated with Phoebus.
[2] The Cumaean Sibyl.

CANTO XXVII

I have now beheld the first two regions, and the purgation of Ambition and of Art — What remain, — earthly Love, Religious belief, Science, Knowledge, Pleasure, are also states of intermediate lustration : the Eternal is beyond—We are now on the beach of an inland sea ; the farther shore densely wooded—I make an act of absolute love and submission to my Guide, who relates how he had protected me thus far against the snares of Ambition, Love, and Religion—A Boat appears—In it is the apparition (seen before at the barrier) of earthly Love—Against his power my Guide promises help —We embark.

" Because of all men present found or past,
Thou art elected by my singular grace
To know the thing that shall the sign outlast ;
Because compassionate love from my high place
Has drawn me down to thee, with thee to stand
Presence to presence visible, face to face ;
Because the limits of man's utmost strand
Thou hast outgone, borne by my power and led
Where time is not, nor space, nor sea, nor land ;
Well hast thou fared, and well thy footsteps sped
By the dim portals of the mystic West
Through the twin realms of those, miscalled the dead,
Who in themselves or art-wrought type expressed
Th' eternal Strength and Beauty ; echoes they

"Of the far Truth, blest gospel of the blest.
Th' unerring guidance theirs, the excellent way,
Yet not the ultimate goal; earth's weeds, earth's flowers
Too oft their steps detained in fond delay;
So to the symbol not the fact their powers
Were given, a thankless gift; till summed in vain
Unguerdoned closed their life-long count of hours;
Nor wholly loss their lot, nor perfect gain.
But keener joys than theirs and worse distress
Five-regioned to thy onward path remain.
Theirs first, self-bound and bondaged to the stress
Of earthly Love, whom all that lives, but most
Earth's best and noblest sons their lord confess.
Theirs next who ventured all, or gained or lost,
A doubtful cast, to follow her, the lure
Of souls, who in th' Eternal makes her boast.
These shalt thou visit, and in their lot, secure
Thyself, such power is mine, behold the doom
Love and Religion to thy kin procure.
For theirs an infinite joy, with infinite pain
Ever entwined, a fire-fount marged with snow,
A sunshine gleam, through drifts of icy rain.
These past, through further realms thy path must go
Where Science reaps its tilth; and, near, the bloom
Faded or fadeless of the poet brow
Be thine t' appraise aright; and last their doom
Who being's store on being's self expended,
Pleasure their goal in life, in death the tomb.
These the seven threads, or singly woven or blended
In life's recurrent loom; broidered and spun
From these the robe o'er man's dull earth extended.
The intermediate this; its bounds outgone,
What last awaits thy path, not mine to tell
Nor thine to hear, till the great Vision won."
As falls on springing grass light rain, so fell

On my glad ears these spoken words, the while
Entranced I lay in love's soul-quickening spell.
The face, my childhood's dream, the form, the smile
In feature limned and hue, the vision long
Desired, in part revealed, in part awhile
Deferred, by thought ungrasped, untold in song
Others' or mine, unveiled beside me then
In singular beauty shone; no visioned throng
Joyous or sad, no semblanced form of men
Hero or saint was there; vanished and gone
Each godlike shape, that vale's late denizen;
Vanished the valley's self, the pageant flown;
And in its place our fronted way before
Waveless and blue a glassy water shone.
In yellow sand sloped at our feet the shore;
But all the further bank in distance seen
Down to the marge a tree-fringed mantle wore,
Of tangled boughs inwoven and glossy green;
As where on tideless shores the lithe Malay
Moors his light skiff beneath the mangrove screen;
Or where the streams down-rolled from far Cathay
In Siam's gulf their waters blend, and make
'Twixt plumy palm and matted fern their way;
A mass perplexed, even to the sinuous snake
Impenetrable; which not the down-poured heat
Of noon can pierce, or slanted whirlwinds shake.
Then I, "Since power, nor art, nor regal seat,
Nor beauty wrought to sculptured form, may grant
The perfect gift, life's goal, nor guide the feet;—
Faded the flowers, blighted the orchard, scant
The light to earth's great darkness; farther lies
The better hope; thou know'st,—fulfil the want;
Through thee, that want's fulfilment; in thy eyes
Mirrored the goal I seek; thy hand the key
Holds to unbar my forfeit Paradise.
And if aught else my eyes desire to see,

"My ears to hear, my thought to know, from all
These visioned scenes, not in themselves, but thee,
The answer lies; writ on the temple wall
The letters they, mis-shaped; but thou the book,
The echoes they; thyself Love's homeward call."
As sunlight poured on flowers, with such a look
Those eyes, that heaven resumed, on mine in place
Responsive beamed, as pleased these words he spoke:
"Brother and nearest, of my kindred race
Dearer and nearer none; as child and boy
Rescued by me from lesser love's disgrace,
From thee through manhood's years vain grief, vain joy,
The dust of life, my care removed, and kept
Love's gold untarnished by base earth's alloy.
And in the hours when toil-outwearied slept
Thy spirit in nightly rest, I sent the train
That o'er thy dream a warning pageant swept.
Else vain thy strength, thy heaven-born purpose vain,
As theirs whom now, midmost the lustral crowd
Shalt thou behold in self-won loss or gain."
He spoke, and pointed where as flits a cloud
Instinct with living fire athwart the blue
When Summer's height to Autumn's verge has bowed,
So on that watery smoothness where the view
Met the dark fringe of boughs enlaced, a boat
Glided, a golden streak of sunbright hue.
Nor oar nor outlined sail I saw, remote
Nor near, it mocked th' enquiring sight; a gleam
Seen, not defined, like maiden love's first thought.
Then as I gazed, across the midway stream
Sudden it darted, through the liquid night
As darts from depths unseen a meteor beam;
Till full revealed in its own quivering light
That ceaseless went and came from stem to prow
Even where we stood the galley paused in sight.
No earth-born shape was there, but in the glow

Of roseate gold translucent him who erst
In beauty lured me up the mountain brow
Again I knew; again th' insatiate thirst
Of Love and Beauty thrilled me, the desire
Blest in pursuit, in late attainment cursed.
So hastes the insect's wing to withering fire;
So leaps the cataract to its shattering fall;
So sinks the meteor's flight in marsh and mire.
And this and more I knew, yet might not all
Resist the manifest spell; such lustre shone
From that too lovely face, so strong the spell.
Trembling I turned me to my guide; "Thy own
Am I, sole hope, sole guardian; this the hour
Of the great venture; thou my trust alone.
For perilous are the ways and dread the power
Of Love, the Lord; nor human foot may brave
Unharmed the path, nor tread the sorcerer's bower."
Gently the Master smiled, "The lion's cave
The lion fearless seeks; to guard be mine,
Thine to obey; no more; be wise, be brave."
Thus while he spoke, as some new-gilded shrine
Glitters from wall to wall, when evening's rite
Bids countless lamps from roof and altar shine,
Not less that wondrous bark with spangly light
Glittering received its freight; then to th' expanse
Of the mid waters winged its self-taught flight.
Nor more I saw nor knew, so deep a trance
Enwrapped me, till we reached the destined grove,
Where dwell those noblest fools of Time's mischance
Vassals of love-born Faith, or faithless Love.

BOOK II

CANTO I

The Third Kingdom—Invocation to Love—We land in a wood, and a cry leads us upward, when Helen of Troy flits as a shadow on the path—She declares herself perfect Beauty, and offers to conduct me through her vassals—My guide agrees, but will accompany us unseen.

FIRST-BORN of earth and heaven; of both the Lord
O Love! of both the outcast thou; thy name
Twofold, by turns reviled, by turns adored;
On thee supremest praise, on thee worst blame,
Curses and hymns alternate wait, but thou
Changeless abid'st, for those and these the same.
O'er all who live thy power, to thee they bow
Freemen or slaves alike; on earth thy feet,
In heaven the splendour of thy aureoled brow.
Diverse thy act's effect, not thou; as heat
Hardens to rock th' enamelled imagery,
But melts the frost-work fret from lawn and street.
Or as some long-forgotten melody,
Heard after years, awakes with equal spell
Pleasure or pain, as bids the memory.
But thou in heights of heaven or depths of hell
No change endur'st, nor by division less
Nor more thy power, alone, immutable.
All loss, all grief, all anguish, all distress

Transparent in thy ray, transformed by thee
Honour become, and life, and happiness.
Where thou art not, life is not; of the tree
Whose leaves are years, whose stem the universe,
Whose fruit are worlds, whose roots eternity,
The quickening sap thou art; the poet's verse,
The artist's skill, the conqueror's wreath, the praise
That of immortal deeds is child and nurse,—
Sweet youth, spring breezes, summer's genial days,
The soft caress of dawn's awakening breath,
When briefest night, and eve till morn delays,
These are thy buds, thy flowers; these weave the wreath
Round thy flushed temples bound; their beauty thine;
From thee they take; parting, to thee bequeath.
On thee I call; assist me, lest the line
By thee untutored fail, as failed the wing
Of him[1] whose fate misnamed th' Icarian brine.
No usual joys, no common woes I sing,
But theirs who, to thy voice obedient proved,
Thy choicest sweets assayed, thy keenest sting.
Of such was I, thou know'st it; thine approved
In perilous days and strange, till wiser grown
In love, more than thy gifts thyself I loved.
In all that lives thou art, but most thy throne
Is in the human heart; be, Lord, in mine,
Be in my voice, my verse; through thee be known
The trophies of thy empire, the long line
Of those thy vassals known in weal or woe,
Mine to record; the praise, the memory thine.
—Such words or like to these from the full flow
Of my pressed heart I spoke, when first the strand
Gave rest and welcome to our freighted prow.
And now glad on the beach we stood; the sand
Up from the margin sloped; in front a wood

[1] Icarus, who fell into the south-east part of the Aegaean Sea.

Made narrow free-way to the new-trod land.
Doubtful awhile which way to turn we stood,
Of guidance fain; but voice nor movement showed
Save the quick glances of the rippling flood;
Not long, till near us on the left I heard,
As when through the hushed depths of stillest noon
Calls on her roving mate some nested bird,
Or thrush, or pleasant oriole; clear the tone
Came on the listening ear; we looked, but shape
Of sentient life or guiding will was none.
So to that cry we turned us, where a cape
Thrust forth a pebbly ridge; and through the heap
Seawards a little streamlet found escape:
And such a narrow path as mountain sheep
May fray through briar and bush, beside the rill
Made covert opening up the woodland steep.
A torrent bed the way, stone-piled; and still
Vaulted with densest copse, and faint the gleam
Of day, though high the noon on plain and hill.
But here through th' interlacing boughs no beam
Could pierce direct or slant; and scarce the tread
Darkling might choose 'twixt slippery ledge and stream.
Then gradual, step by step, the path outspread
Broader and easier grown; and the blue sky
Patched with glad light the greenwood overhead.
Then, as in new-found freedom roved my eye,
Something I saw that oft our pathway crossed
Like mirrored light, flashed on the passers-by;
Vaporous at first in outline, as a ghost
That has outstayed its term; then clearer drawn
In human form distinct it showed; then lost
Or doubtful: So, new venturing on the lawn
From birth-place coverts, courts yet shuns caress
Proffered by beckoning hands a wanton fawn.
But this was beauty's self, nor words express
Nor thought may image forth, though memory's aid

Be summoned all, that perfect loveliness.
A sexless shape at first it seemed, arrayed
In its own roseate light; a double grace
Female, or male, or both, its limbs displayed;
Then all to woman grew, till last the face,
Earth's wonder, pride of Hellas,[1] bane of Troy,
Avowed the god-born flower of Leda's race.
Untold I knew that form, th' incarnate joy
Of full-flushed Venus, knew the fateful charm
That wrought fierce madness in th' Idaean boy;
Whence Ilium mourned in ruin; yet could disarm
The wrath of injured Greece, th' avenging blow;
Such, beauty's love-lent power to heal or harm.
Then with a voice sweeter than music's flow
When oared with mirth and song by Como's walls
In their gay bark the revellers glide and go,
She spoke; "From Sparta's coasts to Ilion's halls
Fated I came, of Love and Death the Queen;
Two worlds my footstool, and their kings my thralls.
For mine all beauty; mine the grace serene
Beauty's best bloom; the brightness that outshines
Whate'er of else is, shall be, or has been.
The net that draws, the chain that all entwines,
My birthright these; to the world's end my name
Writ 'mid the splendours of heaven's burning signs.
Nor false nor traitress I: no slanderous shame
My pure perfection mars; if aught there were
Blameful, on men's surmise, not me, the blame.
From sweetest flowers the wizard's envious care
The deadliest draughts distils; the crystal glass
Stainless itself, reflects or foul or fair.
Times change to what they were not; ages pass,
But sovereign beauty all to her decree
Draws, as the loadstone draws the magnet's mass."
A space she paused; then smiling; "Would'st thou see

[1] Helen.

"My vassals? count their ranks?—though easier far
Numbered the wind-driven ridges of the sea,
When raves November's storm on Istria's bar;[1]
Or when still frosty nights have bared the skies,
To count and reckon each particular star.
Thou wilt; I read thy answer in thy eyes,
Though mute thy speech; for this the trusty guide
Led thee by visioned scenes and form's disguise.
By him, by me, be led;—my steps beside
Secure shalt thou the manifold snares explore
In love's mid pathway spread, by few descried,
By fewer scaped:—and first their doom deplore
Who reckless grasp the thorn-surrounded rose,
Too late with tears bedropped, besprent with gore.
Next, with like fate, unlike deservings, those
Who twined with poisonous growths of fraud and wrong
Love's flowers, till withered both in deathly close.
Nor absent they through miry ways and long
Love's pilgrims stainless found; the faithful few
True to the end th' unfaithful herd among.
Happy their lot! less happy those, the crew
By evil dreams beguiled, the partners made
Of powers unblest, to Love's great laws untrue.
And others there whom fate's untimely shade
Caught and oppressed ere noon; guilty they died
Or guiltless, one their portion; some betrayed,
Betrayers some; nor wanting there who cried
All lost for Love, well lost: and some Love's dower
Bartered, ill choice, for gain or easeful pride.
All these and many more confessed the power
Of beauty seen or fancied; for the eye
Full oft is pander to th' illusive hour."
She spoke; her suasive words, the witchery
Of her sweet smile, captive detained me there,

[1] Mouth of the Danube (?) or, an Adriatic seaport (?)

Bound to assent, yet doubtful of reply.
Till he, my guide, of my heart's thought aware
Thus answer made; "Helen, the portal key
Of this thick-peopled realm, th' apportioned share
Of earthly love on earth made void, to thee
He gave whose gifts abide; to lead be thine,
To follow ours, so wills the high decree.
Thou too, my brother, demur not, nor repine
Her voice awhile t' obey; the passion known
Earthly, demands a guide of earthly line.
A stranger I not citizen here; my throne
Of other ore compact; but she the queen
Till the full tale complete, the term outgone.
Yet present I, though hid; the stars serene
By day as night shine on; unchecked their rays
Pour their strong influence through the noontide screen:
Till past the utmost bound, the circling maze
Woven by the human sense, the human heart,
Again we tread the spirit's kindred ways;
In show, not truth, dissociate; thus we part
A little space; the while be thine to rove
With her thy guide, best skilled the love t' impart
In wise unwisdom hid, the love of Love."

CANTO II

The cry heard before summons us to the guarded grove—Here first are those who have loved in vain—Here is seen Dido: Cephalus lamenting Procris, and one of Amalfi with his drowned Love.

THE child who from his mother's customed smile
And birthplace-home forth sent to lodgment new
And guardians strange, each voice each face awhile
Distrustful hears and sees; and oft his view
Around him sidelong throws, if chance to find
Aught that recalls the known, the trusted few,
His childhood's friends; so I with doubtful mind,
Reft of that loved companionship till now
Inseparate, followed my new guide assigned.
With little toil we gained the ridgy brow
Whence, like Ligurian fields from Lombard towers
Beheld, a level plain spread far below.
And hedgerow lines inwove with budding flowers
Such as Spring loves, enmeshed with curious maze
Meadows, and lawns, and sun-illumined bowers.
And, "Here the appointed mansion, here delays,"
So spoke the Ledan Queen, "their term whom love
Twined in the labyrinth fold of passionate days."
Not yet her words had ceased when clear above
Outrang the note first by the sea-beach heard,
Guide to the entrance of that guarded grove.

Upward I looked, for there what seemed a bird
Bright-eyed, with jewelled plume, and beak of gold,
Hovered our heads above; the warm air stirred
By the ever-quivering wings fluttered the fold
Of the light robe that girt dame Helen's breast,
And waved the ringlet o'er those ivories rolled.
"Here," thus again the note was loud, "the rest
Of love's outwearied pilgrims; here at even
Is of each mateless bird the folding nest.
Of love in death made perfect this the heaven,
Of blood for tears poured forth this the reward,
Of life for love resigned the guerdon given."
Thus while it sung down the green slant of sward
My steps with secret force were drawn, till soon
I reached the wild-briar hedge, and circling guard.
With every flower that opes to sunniest June
Thick-set the ground; the rose, the jasmine there,
The flaunted rival of the day-star's noon,
Tall lilies, close-set hyacinths, pansies fair,
And fairer yet, the flower by nymphs beloved,[1]
Beautiful child of beauty's self-despair.
O'er these and countless more my vision roved
Pleased, yet amazed; for each of crimson hue,
Whate'er its form, to the light breezes moved.
Not other shows some landscape to the view
Through tinted glass, where in one ruddy stain
Is blent the forest green, the skiey blue.
The while my gentle guide and courteous, fain
My doubt to solve, thus spoke; "Thy wonderment
Easy solution finds and answer plain.
They whose dear loves on earth untimely shent[2]
Were quenched in blood by self or foemen shed,
Have this their realm with mimick hue besprent."

[1] The hyacinth, sprung from the blood of a youth loved by Apollo.

[2] Properly, *shamed*: used here apparently for *ruined*.

Thus she; but ere in answering guise my head
I turned, even now a form [1] of witching grace
And queenly bearing sad and measured tread
Before us passed; again I looked, that face
Eager to scan, but nought was there to tell
Who, or how brought to th' immemorial place.
"Myself thou know'st not yet; but all too well
My tale thou know'st," thus spoke that royal form,
"Blazed in Love's loftiest heaven, Love's saddest hell.
What time by Venus roused the ill-purposed storm
Me with Troy's perjured chief to that dark cave
Drove where the fateful hours of shame deform
The seal affixed, and from a husband's grave
Roused up the vengeful ghost, no more to rest
Till sunk Troy's Rome, a Punic Vandal's slave.[2]
Here, here," she cried, and bared her riven breast,
"The double fount; not redder though more wide
Is Phlegethon's stream; rest, wronged Sichaeus, rest."
No more she spoke, but past; silent my guide
Smiled as in pitying scorn; but I for grief
Wept, and love's due by fate to love denied.
Nor less perplexed why of earth's good the chief
Earth's cruellest ill should prove, and why withheld
From life's worst wrongs save through worse wrongs relief.
And why to opposite act by fate compelled
Duty and love; and what the one confers
Is by the other in hostile guise repelled.

The lawn is now close embowered with trees of crimson blossom. Here lies Procris, dying in the arms of Cephalus. We now reach a lake, lovely even as those of Italy. A wretched old man, unnamed, is seen; he is of Amalfi; was visited in his island dwelling by his Love, who, drowned by her brother's treachery, is now held in his arms.

[1] Dido.

[2] Sack of Rome by the Vandals.

CANTO III

In a fiery vision Love himself appears—Innumerable martyrs of passion go by in a mighty train—A youth invites me to remain and learn the history of Love's pilgrims.

Helen assures me of the vast number of Love's devotees: a sudden glare as of fire breaks forth: Helen vanishes, and Love is seen in his despotic splendour: The air round him is stirred by the invisible presence of multitudinous life. Then the vision passes,

and loud and clear
Came voices, songs of death with victory crowned.
Whilst from the further lawn approaching near
Such crowds as some great city's festal day
Might send afield to greet the springtide year,
With chaunt and garlands wreathed and vestments gay,
So was the throng that o'er the limitless plain
In broad procession trod the flower-paved way.
'Twixt joy and sadness held, a seemly train
They passed in sight, and on each face displayed
Was calm assurance sealed o'er inward pain.
A flaming heart enwoven with crimson braid
Each vestment bore, of other symbol bare,
And round each head a roseate halo played:
Not ruddier gleam through winter's frosted air

Low skirting suns at even: with this the red
Clothed on the love-bird's breast might ill compare.
Thus, yet not wholly thus, their radiance shed
Those crimson gleams that from Love's riven breast
Forth issuing, orbed in light each martyr head.
Not theirs the satiate calm, the perfect rest,
Though passed the barrier gate,—as birds in flight
Scaped the hawk's chase, nor yet the sheltering nest
Attained, though near; on circling pinions light
Poising they float, nor fold the outstretched wing
Awhile, nor beat the air;—so these to sight
Nor restful all nor restless; but the sting
Of memory rankles yet, nor absolute joy
Nor pain to these the lustral ages bring.
And passionate hope remains, and past annoy
Yet unforgot, and the death-purchased pleasure
They reached, yet might not what they reached enjoy;
Till paid strong passion's debt, fulfilled the measure
By justest laws ordained for those who served
In part their own, part the high Master's pleasure.
So from the perfect path aside they swerved,
Nor the full goal attained, till death that erred not
Atonement made, or from worse ill preserved.
And some to life's true worth life's self preferred not,
But ventured all for all, the narrower bar
Of self o'erleapt, the siren voices heard not.
By this, the rose-paved valley near and far
Was dense with martyr forms, yet each from each
Distinct, as flower from flower or star from star.
And all I knew, nor aught their tale to teach
Was needed there; present to me the past
Embodied stood, far as past ages reach,
Up to the vision-gifted morn, when cast
My lot an hour with theirs; their joys I knew,
Their pangs, their hopes, their doom, their first, their last.

Till, as with morn's first gleam the thick-fallen dew
Weeps day's disclosure near, so filled my eyes
With tears at the world's wrong made clear in view.

Helen again appears: the crowd of Love's martyrs pass into calm, whilst she names them. A youth speaks:

"Whom here thou seest," to me
Such were his words, "in chronicled prose or rhyme
Emblazoned, or to later memory
Unknown, unwrit, unsung, yet all are they
Who loyal sealed in blood Love's sovereignty.
But thou, whoe'er thou art, who earth's pale day
Again shalt view returning, whence in truth
Few have returned or none, a difficult way,
Here bide awhile, and learn what deeds of ruth,
What darings high, what tenderest longings led
From the vain show to where the eternal Sooth[1]
Begins its reign, not perfects; farther shed
As on low hills the silvery dawn, above
Is the sought goal for Love's true pilgrims, led
Through change and death, to deathless, changeless Love."

[1] *Sooth*, Truth.

CANTO IV

The youth leads me where are Guinevere, Orpheus, and others; followed by more heroic forms, headed by Mark Antony—I ask for Cleopatra, and learn that she with other sinners is undergoing lustral penance elsewhere — I see Imelda and Bonifazio.

As who 'mid galleried domes, a nation's store
  Of form eterne in stone or pictured grace
Wanders, intent on art's successive lore,
And entering finds apart in special place
  The work of earliest years, when unripe skill
What the mind saw gave not the hand to trace,—
And these beyond, the mightier ones who fill
  With perfect art bodied from perfect thought
The loftiest summit of the Aeonian hill,—
Enwrapt he gazes, till the wonders sought
  O'ermaster sense; and for delight mere awe
Remains, and dread by present godhead wrought;
Even so was I when gathered there I saw
  Love's hero-martyrs, each a priceless gem
In the great Crown set by eternal law,
Mightiest of Lords, on thee; for thou to them
  Art paramount right and wrong; and thou and they
Are each to each guerdon and diadem.

I see that the youth, my present guide, bears signs of violent death.

Low was his voice yet clear; "The foremost place
Of those thou seest," he said, "to her[1] belongs
Who wrought for Britain's peers disastrous days,
By Camelot's guilty court, and Arthur's wrongs:
And close beside in Thracian guise the lord[2]
Of beasts and men, such kingship crowned his songs,
Himself the slave of love; the powers abhorred
Of hell's dark caves he dared, to break the chain
Of her long sought, late found, in vain restored.
Next following hand in hand thou seest the twain[3]
Who found by Ninus' tomb their own; the fate
That dyed th' o'erbranching fruit with purple stain.
And linked in lot with these,[4] though by far date
Sundered, the pair whom towered Verona mourns,
Dear offerings on the altar-fires of hate,
Proud Capulet's feud and Moneschalchi's scorns:—
But from that death was life; so 'mid their peers
Brightest on them th' eternal splendour dawns.
O but for these and like to these the years
Were rayless all and dim! through these alone
Is earth commensurate with the heavenly spheres.
A sunless sky, a featureless mask of bone,
A withered tree, nor bark nor foliage there,
Were else thy meed, O little world and lone."
Next, following these, a band I saw more fair
Than fresh-blown flowers in grass and hedge; the smile
Of wakening fields roused by the springtide air.
There the lost victim of the Naiads' guile,
Hylas, and whom the Syrian stream in blood
Yearly records;[5] from old Trinacria's isle

[1] Guinevere.
[2] Orpheus.
[3] Pyramus and Thisbe.
[4] Romeo and Juliet.
[5] Thammuz-Adonis.

To Britain's mist-veiled coasts and Avon's flood [1]
Song-famed Adonis; and the leaf-traced word
Of self-upbraiding grief, thy passionate mood
Helios, of light and life all-powerful lord,
But powerless whom thou lovedst [2] from envious night
To save, the loved one's death thy love's reward.
All these my happy eyes with such delight
As his who first on Eden gazed, surveyed,
Now perfect made by death in deathless light.

Love's greater warriors now appear; more glowing, but sterner and some more aged than those before seen—Mark Antony leads them—I ask where is Cleopatra? The youth answers,

"Where dateless years of gloom efface
The life misused, 'mid the dark groves thy path
Hitherward crossed, she finds her lustral place.
There all whom angered love's avenging wrath
Has doomed to second death, the punishment
Of wasted life, dark crime, and violate faith.
With her Mycaenae's queen,[3] and th' other sent
Death-gift to France from death-stricken Italy,
Catharine,[4] red star of slaughter's firmament.
But not on these be now thy thought, nor I
Would such in memory bear; to each his part,
And other mine, and sure." Then from the sky
Such radiance round us shone, that all my heart
With joy was filled, and constant faith that fails not,
Though present help be none, and hope depart,
And closed the iron net, and strength avails not
The prisoned life to free; the pain that seals

[1] Alludes to Shakespeare's early *Venus and Adonis*, and to *Paradise Lost*, i. 446.
[2] Hyacinthus, cf. C. ii. 41.
[3] Clytemnestra.
[4] Catharine de' Medici.

Love's ratified bond he knows, and knowing quails not.
Then as the doubtful ray that first reveals
Through cloudy bars where evening's starry Queen
Guides to the Western marge her downward wheels,
A form of maiden beauty, lovelier seen
Than she of Ida's guests the loveliest, stood
First dim, then clear defined those shapes between.
Loose her ungirded robe and loose the snood
Dropped from her ebon hair; unsandalled shone
Her ivory feet, but stained with bruise and blood.
But she on him she loved intent alone
Of all beside regardless showed, secure
Him her sole lord, come life, come death, to own.
On her his eyes were bent; one radiance pure
Encircling wrapped them round; of others told
Not even remembrance might in count endure.
I saw and knew the twain in stories old,
The chronicled love, the ambushed hate, the knife,
Th' envenomed wound, the kiss by love made bold
In poison's deadliest spite; till herited strife
Found in their grave its tomb; and love's despair
To sad Bologna concord gave and life.
Imelda! Bonifazio![1] loveliest pair
And best of loved Hesperia; who the tale
Knows not? who owns not in their woes a share?

The lovers breathe their tale into my heart—The treacherous wounds which murdered him—Her faithfulness through violence and poison.

Then as dark copse, dull plain, and heath-brown hill
By sudden sunlight touched, in green and gold
To beauty turn, so to th' all-healing Will
Responsive flashed a ray that fold on fold

[1] Unidentified, after a search through the contents of several hundred *Novelle*.

Infinite depths revealed of happiness
By mortal eyes unseen, to ears untold.
And all earth knows of joy to this was less
Than to an Alp a sand-grain; all delight
With this compared were pain, all bliss distress.
And more I saw but tell not, lest the sight,
Like the rash huntsman's of Cyllene's grove,[1]
Be to th' unworthy blindness; veiled in light
Thou with thy hid ones dwell'st, triumphant Love.

[1] Teiresias, blinded for an indiscreet glance at Athena.

CANTO V

Memories of English scenery and of youth return—Earthly Love now appears as my leader; he enumerates various classes of his subjects, until for a space I fall under his influence—My true Guide resumes his sway, the other paying him homage—A mystical vision, wherein Love and I are blended in my Guide—As a central Form, Eternal Love is now seen, in whom all lives are ultimately absorbed.

MEADOWS, my childhood's Eden! hedge-row flowers
Costlier esteemed than gems! green copse and tree
Shelter and dream-land of my noontide hours,
What breadths of various land, what wastes of sea
Have from my present sundered yours! and how
After long absence would your greeting be!
Better apart abide; in memory's Now
Remains unchanged the self of things; her art
O'er your wan semblance spreads youth's golden glow.
But ah! the life that in those scenes had part,
The form, the voice, the clasping hand, the smile,
The warmth, the answering beat of heart to heart,
Memory! canst thou restore; dead things awhile
Canst thou re-clothe in freshness? and to Spring
Winter's lone frost, hoar age to youth beguile?
Not thus, though great thy power; the years that bring,
Take what they brought, and more; the swallows' flight

Speeds their departing, spreads no homeward wing.
Such thoughts were mine when passed, effaced in light
Those loveliest forms and fairest, and alone
I stood, like one by sight deprived of sight,
Darkling awhile, till slow returning shone
On my dazed eyes the daylight dawned anew
As on a traveller in a land unknown.
Peaceful before me lay outstretched in view
A garden trim with flowers, the Northern clime
Such as attest in varied scent and hue;
And tufts of greenest grass inwoven with thyme
And hollows cowslip-marged, and clematis hoar
On mossy banks, fair England's village pride,—
Not given to other lands, though vaunted more
In flower or fruit, forest or field, and clad
With all the sun-traced zone's perennial store.
Dear land, dear fields, dear flowers, to me, though sad
With memories of far years, when dawning life
Was dawning love, now dim with tears, now glad
With joys half real, half fancied, peace with strife
Alternate, strength with weakness, so the hours
Unreckoned passed, with squandered offerings rife.

Earthly Love now stands by me, disguised as a pilgrim, and looks on me with blame but more pity—He tells me I am no longer his servant, and then describes the varying nature and fortune of his slave-warriors; each according to his deeds and sufferings has fit award.

"And it and they are mine, in me begun,
Ended in me, since the first Eastern team
Gave to a tenantless earth a new-orbed sun.
Till like a tale rehearsed, a morning dream
From memory rased, the separate drops of life
Merge in the fullness of my widening stream.

"And lover, loved, friend, brother, sister, wife,
All names, all forms of love, in me have rest
From a world's wrong, and vain opinion's strife."

The charm of sensuous law, the unrest of mortal love and hate, fall on me for a moment.

Then broke self-snapped the spell; to wakening mind
Restored around I gazed, in manlier plight,
On those first aims intent, as a brisk wind
Scatters a marsh-born fog; for there in sight
Stood my true Guide, long absent; calm but stern
His look, as steadfast burns the watch-tower's light
That warns of danger nigh, when seethe and churn
O'er the jagged rocks the waves; so, 'mid the shade
Of that dim realm his face might I discern.

Before him pales Earthly Love, who gives me over to the true Guide—In him Love and I are now both merged in a mystical trance and vision.

As wax by wax impressed fresh imagery
Holds and retains, so to Thy likeness grew
Whate'er was love's in love, or mine in me,

Whilst thus blended in one pure light, as chords in one strain of music.

As he, the God-loved man who, bowed and grey,
By Patmos' low-reefed shore beheld where stood
An angel shape midmost the orb of day,
So 'mid the life-giving splendours of the flood
That wrapped us round, central a Form I saw
That to itself all form, all life, subdued,
Or mine or theirs, linked in eternal law

Life's love, eternity's love; and all beside
As one vast circle to this centre draw.
Here stayed the vision's range, as stays the tide
By its own weight restrained; more to behold
Had blindness wrought, or memory's act denied.
And thou, my friend, to whom the tale is told,
Enquire not now for more; content to know
How Love,—though years be young or years be old,
In starry heights, or air, or earth below,
And countless lives and countless selves that aye
Like sparks from the great furnace pass and go,—
One with itself, with these abides, its ray
Alike on dale or hill; true guidance set
To the sure goal, though chance the path astray.
If more thou know'st be wary, nor forget
Him, the rash searcher of Cithaeron's grove [1]
Made wise too late for pardon; folded yet
The doors, forbid the inmost shrine of Love.

[1] Actaeon.

CANTO VI

As I waken from the swoon that follows the vision, Venus appears —She speaks; but a chill wind withers her beauty—I find myself in a dark wood, where Tannhauser sits—We speak together, till a cry is heard; he answers it, and offers to tell me his tale of despair.

THE hour that least of shade, of stillness most
Allots, now halved the dial, nor yet the day
'Twixt East and West his medial line had crost,
When phantom shapes of power, so stories say,
And sounds articulate heard, though spokesman there
Be none, by copse or lone hill-side dismay;
Then chief when earth poised 'twixt the Delian pair[1]
In doubtful balance hangs, and neutral held
Lies to her spirit lords passive and bare.
But I whose sight by the great vision quelled
Awhile had passed to darkness, as in death
Abode, from th' outer sense of things repelled.
Then from the blackness of some chasm beneath
As earth-born vapours rise, upgathering slow
To definite shapes, then loose the woven wreath,
Again they come, again they pass and go,
Till shaped in steady likeness they pourtray
The secrets questioned of the gulf below:—

[1] Apollo and Artemis.

Even so from that deep slumber, of the clay
That clogged me yet the due, a flickering gleam
Of things half shaped half shapeless found its way.
Then from the mass confused, so showed my dream,
A perfect form attuned to perfect grace
Dawned, as on night's drear rack the daystar's beam.
A woman's form it seemed, a woman's face,
But both divine, as from the Aegaean spray
Goddess and queen, she of the Titan race
Uprose the last, the fairest; long her sway
O'er earth, as Jove's o'er heaven, supreme confessed,
Till paled to Bethlehem's star the Hellene ray.
And, "I am she," such were her words expressed
By sounds more sweet than harp or lyre, "who long
Throned in each mortal, each immortal breast.
All joys, all passions, all delights that throng
Life's ever-varying path from youth to age,
By me are given, to me of right belong.
Blank and unlovely without me the page
Of earth's recorded day; the living springs
Are mine alone that man's great thirst assuage.
And high and low, priests, warriors, statesmen, kings,
The churl who tills the ground, the lord who owns,
And he who weeps, and he who joys and sings
To me attune their chaunts, to me their moans.
Who knows not me nought worthful knows, or has,
Though crowned with all earth's crowns, throned on all thrones."
As birds in summer boughs or streams in grass
Sweet melody make nor cease, so to my ear
Her words, nor might the notes from memory pass.
Nor unobeyed the call; till sudden fear
Fell on me while I listening stood; for there
Like the chill breath that speaks the iceberg near
To the ill-destined ship, in numb despair
The seamen bide their fate, as onward borne

Through the dense mist to frozen death they fare,
Even such a chill, so icy, so forlorn,
'Twixt her and me was breathed; but whence the blast
I knew not, cold as death and keen as scorn.
O'er that fair face, those godlike limbs it passed,
To furrowed age upwithering all; a sight
That with mere horror made love's self aghast,
And passion changed to loathing; with affright
Mingling, till broke my dream, though yet my thought
Flickered, like eyes confused with changing light.
Upstarting round I gazed, but vainly sought
What might assurance bring, for all around
Was strange and new to sight and hearing wrought.
Grey rocks on either side, and damp the ground
Beneath with a hid stream, and high before
Uprose a mount with serried pine-trees crowned.
With thick-fallen leaves and matted grass the floor
Was dense, and dense above th' o'er-branching grove
Hemmed in by crags half-seen and precipice hoar.
Nor beam of noontide sun nor stars above
Might pierce that close-laced veil of sullen green
By the tall trees in wildered foliage wove.
Such the dark dell where plucked the Colchian Queen [1]
Herbs better left unsought; in such a glade
Outwears the Cambrian seer his spell-bound teen.[2]
But other likeness his whom here in shade
Of the sad copse with his own gloom combined
Pensive I saw, in knightly garb arrayed.
Bowed on his knees his low-drooped head reclined;
Hid was his face; but grief, most to despair
Akin, no less on every limb was signed.
"Or man, or spirit, or phantom-shape, whate'er
Thou sitt'st, the guardian of this loneliness,
If outward semblance right thy state declare;

[1] Medea. [2] Merlin.

"Whose portion, say, this region? what access
Leads up the mountain barrier? by what name
Thee shall I call? how soothe thy grief's excess?"
Thus I; but he like one made mute by shame
Remained, or imaged rock that bides unmoved
The passer's questioning glance, itself the same.
Again I spoke: "By all in memory proved
Life's best or worst allotment, by whate'er
Most thou hast mourned, most cherished, dearest loved,
Scorn not my words, but answer; heaviest care
Is lighter made by speech; the spirit's load
That single strength o'erburdens two may share."
"How to these depths thou cam'st, or who the road
Gave to thy feet I know not;" so the form
Replied, nor raised his head, nor look bestowed:
"But if as sounds thy voice the life-blood warm
Yet fills thy veins, be warned in time, as those
Who in dark skies forecast the nearing storm.
Ah me! by seeming calm beguiled I chose
The blackness of that storm, whose drops are tears,
Passion its lightnings, black despair its close."
Here ceased his speech; like one who, curious, nears
Some cave's dim entrance, where the dusty trace
Of wolf or bear impressed the token bears,
Cautious he ventures on the unknown space
Of inner darkness; fear and quick desire
Contending in his mind hold equal place;
Even so was I distraught, or to retire
From quest of perilous lore, or undeterred
By those dark words, the utmost scope t' enquire.
Thus while I doubtful paused, at distance heard
A sound of plaint that solace craved, yet ill
Hoped, so it seemed, to find, the silence stirred.
Twice shrilled that piteous cry, then all was still
In the dark vale, save where by wind unshaken
Swayed the dense pine-grove of th' opposing hill.

A voice it seemed of one who loved forsaken
By one beloved, and from all succour lone
By anguish throes or pangs of death o'ertaken.
But he, that crouching shape, than whom the stone
On which he sat, till then more lifelike seemed,
Rose, quick responsive to the summon's moan.
I marked by grief not age his features seamed
With lines unmeet, and haggard pale his cheek
By matted hair deformed, and tears o'erstreamed.
But in his eyes such fire as on the peak
Of Cotopaxi burns, when the red glare
Hell-kindled pale heaven's lightning shows and weak.
And loud he cried, "O Love beyond compare
Loving and loved and loveliest! is thy pain
Hopeless as mine? as mine thy heart's despair?
O death that will not die! O heavy chain
That binds us yet unites not; is there grief
As mine? as thine?—and both endured in vain."
Then thus to me; "Who suffers, small relief
Finds in recounted sorrows; scant delight
Is theirs who crown them with the shrivelled leaf.
Yet by the Power constrained that wills aright
Whate'er it wills, though balm of healing none
Be to my wounds, nor to my darkness light,
For thee, who to these realms hast passage won
Not by thy skill but his, will I declare
The doom of many, imaged forth in one.
Not for my feet alone was spread the snare,
For thee, for them prepared; the iron net
Caged on my flutterings, countless prisoners share.
But I from all most wretched chosen and set
Beacon and warning sign; the hill, the grove
Thou seest of her once goddess known, and yet
Godlike though fallen, the Venus Queen of Love."

CANTO VII

Tannhauser relates his well-known story—His lustful youth—The summons to the mountain of Venus (whereof the spiritual counterpart is before me)—The joy and the misery for uncounted years—My guide promises him oblivion of the past and ultimate restoration to real happiness.

CANTO VIII

Tannhauser's tale continued—Sleeping in the Venus-bower, a spectre crowd of fellow-sinners addresses him—He wakes within a tomb, the vampire-corpse of Venus by him, and horrid visions of Sin around :—

"But in those eyes with which heaven's starry fire
Might ill compare, an evil radiance glowed
As the night-flame o'er-flickering swamp and mire,
Where by black depths begirt the treacherous road
Leads to belated death; such ending have
Trust on illusion, love on sense bestowed.
And all around, as in a rock-hewn grave
Shapes of corruption bred, and noisome things
Fled through the gloom, or clustered in the cave.
All forms misformed, all foul imaginings
Confused were gathered there; a spectre crew,
Harpies and Gorgons, vulture beaks and wings.
There, 'mid those phantom masks, distinct I knew
Ill thoughts of aspect foul, and deeds of blame,
And vain regrets, and cares of pallid hue;
And vile reproach, and want, and blinking shame,
And secret guilt, and manifest infamy;
Lost time, lost love, lost life, lost hope, lost name."

But he cannot yet leave her—He swoons, and wanders in misery over the world—My guide teaches the moral of his story.

CANTO IX

Circling the Mountain, we traverse a blood-stained way, and meet infinite fantastic shapes of illusion, led by Anteros-Lust and Fancy, followed by a crowd of their victims—At a trumpet-call every monstrous form of evil, and Venus herself, go by—My guide announces the final purgation of these sinners.

As who from lazar haunts and beds of pain,
  Powerless to soothe or cure, to th' open door
With gladness turns, of air and freedom fain,
From that dank glade we passed; the way before
  Circled the mount ill-famed; the silent wood
Like cloistered walls close-vaulted arched us o'er.
With russet leaves and shivered twigs bestrewed
  A narrow path we trod, and all the way
Was crimson-stained and foul with mire and blood.
Then marked I where by the hill-side the day
  Was densest curtained off, a purple brook
As from death-wounded limbs trickled alway.
Deep loathing seized my thought; with horror shook
  My limbs; my feet refused in that foul stain
To wade, my eyes on its red trail to look.
Paused too my guide, as whom in doubt detain
  Things yet unseen but near; on mine his hand
Was laid, in sign of timely warning fain.[1]

[1] *Fain*, eager.

Then, as at summons of the choral wand
By scenic sorcerer waved, in semblant rage
Swayed by th' orchestra's swell, a motley band
As sylphs or demons dight, the resonant stage
With mimic war invade; now high now low
Pennons with pennons, swords with swords engage;—
So from that evil marsh of crimson dye
Infinite shapes, fantastic most and new,
In motley groups upgathering passed us nigh.
I marked, and saw where foremost ranged in view
With changeful colours gay that mocked the sight
A leader Form headed that motley crew.
Like one half mad, or ill with wine bedight,
Amazed he trod; on all around was cast
His look, yet fixed on none his lust's delight.
Beside his way thin hopes, regretful past,
Vain longings, causeless joys, heart's emptiness,
Flew wild as leaves whirled by November's blast.
Nor name nor sign he bore; yet none the less
Him that ill power I knew, Love's twin-born foe,[1]
Who curses most where most he seems to bless;
As shadow cleaves to light, ebb follows flow,
Night tracks the day, death life; where flourish most
Health-breathing herbs, earth's subtlest poisons grow.
Him next, or side by side, of that bad host
Second in might and headship, Fancy vain,
Pander of ill, the left-hand pathway crossed.
On a strange beast,[2] that Lycia's threefold bane
Or seemed, or was, he rode; a coloured glass
Of unreal hues in ever-flickering stain
Aloft he held; his tread beneath the grass
To flowers was turned, to gems the flowers; but all
Were fleeting false, as dreams that please and pass.
Followed on these such crowd as to the call
Of music loud and clamour throngs the ways

[1] Lust as Anteros. [2] Chimaera.

Of popular mask or pageant festival.
With necks outstretched and eager eyes they gaze
As each to each a marvel grown; so these
Leading or led revolved in Fancy's maze.
And in hot suns as restless swarm the bees
Where summer hives are ranged; in angry chase
Now here now there they come, they go, nor cease;
So restless these, as of their own disgrace
Eager, of sensuous Love and Fancy bred,
Followed th' incestuous authors of their race.
Last following went, to harmful venture led,
A pale disfeatured crowd, the fools of time,
By time bemocked as living, scorned when dead.
'Mid these, grieving, I saw life's fairest prime
Cankered at heart by that dark power, whose skill
Is man's decay, life's ruin, Nature's crime.
Not long; for from the depths of that dark hill,
By the wayside, I heard a clanging blast
Trumpet-like blown, in threatening notes and shrill.
And to that summoning call obedient passed
Across the field such monstrous forms and dread
That memory's self even now recoils aghast.
For there of Lerna's pest the sevenfold head
Living, yet cleft I saw; the Furies there,
Medusa's snakes, and Harpy wings outspread;
And linked with these wan sorrow, gnawing care,
Wasting disease, foul shame, lone poverty,
And late repentance vain, and stark despair.
And ancient hate to murder kin went by,
And treason masked in smiles, and rancour fell,
And ugly death, and after infamy;
All that of direst wrong old stories tell;
All horrid shapes, all foulest agonies,
All worst essayed on earth or dreamed in hell,
With nameless deeds and things that hand denies
To write or tongue to tell, with these I saw,

Till sick my heart with faintness, seared my eyes.
Yet by my guide upheld, and the great awe
Of that old daemon power, whose might dischained
Before us passed, no step might I withdraw.
Then midmost these, nor sullied more nor stained
Than by dark clouds the moon, that beauty shone,
Of mortal men the bliss, the curse, ordained.
As through Thaumantia's [1] many-coloured zone
Sun-drawn on slanted rainfall, plain and field
Glitter in that gay gauze across them thrown.
So all that motley concourse unconcealed
In Venus' self I saw, th' ensnared, the snare,
And the great canker of earth's rose revealed.
Then with the rest she vanished; mirk the air
Hung o'er the forest track; nor shape nor aught
But the sad trees and silent mount was there.
While thus my brother-guide; "The doctrine taught
Forget not thou, nor deem the pageant vain
To thy roused sense in visioned semblance brought.
Know then as to her nest the bird again
From furthest flight returns, as heat from fire,
Harvest from seed, from full-charged clouds the rain,
Each true to each,—such sequence ill desire
Finds to its aim or makes; the banded shaft
Flies to its mark, nor lower strikes nor higher.
And nature's primal bounds nor force nor craft
May move or overpass; his little sail
Man sets at will; the breezes hers that waft.
Nor may his bark the happy isles avail
To reach who reckless steers; nor his to shun
The barrier reefs, though favouring breathe the gale.
And more; What flowers, what fruits, the glorious sun
Looks on are healthful found; but poisonous those
Sprouted of sunless mould and shadows dun.
Sweet the tall lily's whiteness, sweet the rose

[1] Iris, the rainbow.

"Unfold them to the day; from vaporous night
Her hemlock growths the Cretan sorceress[1] chose.
So in man's heart, life's garden, earth's delight,
All pleasant things in form, and scent, and hue,
In Truth's white radiance steeped their rays unite;
Pure thoughts, high deeds, glad utterance, purpose true,
Whate'er of best heaven circles, earth allows,
Or th' interlustral state transforms anew.
With quickening dews are drenched that garden's boughs
Rained from th' eternal dawn; the thorns to flowers
Are changed, bright chaplets of immortal brows.
But other doom is his whom the dark powers
Of ill, th' invisible worm, has found, and made
Haunt of his breast in youth's ill-guarded hours.
There things mis-shaped, in fair disguise arrayed,
Misplaced desires, ill thoughts, and deeds unclean,
The toadstool growth of falsehood's fostering shade.
Those worst whom here or there the sorceress-Queen
Claims for her own, and in th' accursed hill
Prisoners detains, in torment-joys obscene.
Yet these of error more than purposed ill
Victims or slaves, shall the great morn deliver
By suffering cleansed from stain; th' eternal Will
That life not death decrees, of life the giver,
Pitying such end ordains, while onward move
Helmless, yet steered, the wrecks down the great river
To the far goal, the lustral calm of Love."

[1] Medea of *Colchis* is apparently intended.

CANTO X

We pass into a clear landscape : a Star glitters before us—Here are the true and honourable votaries of Love and Friendship—We meet a common soldier who slew himself after the Emperor Otho's defeat at Brescia ; he tells his story, and explains the ethics of wrong and rightful suicide.

I return with joy from those dark woods to open earth and skies and a fair flowery landscape : a brilliant light points our track ; I ask its meaning of my guide :—

THEN he ; "Of ill desire and vain pretence
Of the world's passing show, who, free from stain
Have to true love subdued the partial sense,
Here find their just abode ; pleasure nor pain
Of earth can touch them more ; secure they wait
The life eterne, porch of Love's inmost fane.
And faithful consorts here by envious fate
Asunder torn in life, in death united
Taste of love's vine the clusters sweet though late.
And who through wintry storms the friendship, plighted
In pleasant days of spring, maintained ; and who
Have truth with truth even to the end requited.
And equal made with these in honour due
Brothers in deed as kin ; no worthier band

"Than theirs is called in all that glorious crew.
And, ranked with these, who to their lord's command
Freely could all resign; who lived and died
Not to their own but to their chieftain's hand."
Even as he spoke our onward path beside
One I beheld close stepping pace for pace,
As to our way companion given or guide.
Unknown to me the garb, unknown the face,
Yet not unwelcome there nor strange, but seemed
For happy ends sent from some happy place.
Crested the helm, and bright the armour gleamed
That clad the vigorous limbs; yet who beheld
Herald of peace, not war, that form had deemed.

I ask who he is; he replies that his name is of no consequence:

"'Unmarked of men to live, unmourned to die
Was all I asked or gained, content to know
Sealed in my blood love's immortality.
More would'st thou learn? then hear; When Brescia's snow
With Roman blood by Romans shed distained,
Bade Rome's eighth emperor hope and life forgo,
Nor to Rome's laurelled champion aught remained
But for his Rome to die, so fate's decree
Of secular crime the just award ordained,—
As on some jutting cliff the wintry sea
Tumultuous breaks; unmoved the waves among
Bides the black rock till night and tempest flee,—
Pontiff and victim made of secular wrong
So, Otho! stood'st thou then; while in mad mood
Before, around thee surged the warrior throng,
Scarce scaped the carnage field; with dust and blood
Their armour foul, their banners soiled and torn,
Like hunted wolves at desperate bay they stood.

" 'Vengeance or death,' their cry; 'no second morn,
Dishonoured, ours to see; nor Nero's heir,
Rome's choice, shall basely veil to German scorn.'
But he, 'Not mine Hesperia's crown to wear
Wet with Hesperia's tears; not mine to climb
Slippery with Roman blood th' Imperial stair.
Enough the carnage past; to future time
'Mid Rome's great memories stored, be Otho's death
Found the atonement of sad Otho's crime.'
Thus he; with staring eyes and in-drawn breath
We heard the self-spoke doom, like men forsook,
Nor hope from gods above, nor fiends beneath;
Each gazed on each; each in the other's look
Saw but his own re-imaged; each his name
Charactered read in black dishonour's book.
Yet none replied or spoke, where all of blame
Conscious and foul defeat; nor sign nor word
Found to effacement of remembered shame.
But I, to whom the voice of my dear lord
As fuel was to flame, from the mid throng
Stood forth, sole spokesman of the warrior horde;
And thus; 'Of civic rights or popular wrong
Not mine to know nor reck; alone thy will
For law we own; to it, to thee belong.
Ready for thee to save, for thee to spill
Or others' blood or ours; our plighted vow
Thus we maintain, thus what we vouched fulfil.' "
No more he spoke; as summer morn a glow
Suffused his face; then with a smile he bared
Midmost his breast the love-approving blow.

My guide teaches the doctrine of wrongful and justifiable suicide.

CANTO XI

The City of True Love rewarded—Some among a vast crowd of the faithful excel in rosy light—These, the soldier explains, are heroic souls.—Theseus appears, and tells of his life and journey to Hell with Peirithous.

We pass the plain rapidly, and reach the gate of the City of True Love rewarded.

"ONE love, one faith, one victor-wreath they own,"
Thus spoke my guide, "though ranged in three-fold sign
The bannered guardians of the Master's throne.
But the pure whiteness of the foremost line
Is perfect love's; the red, love's martyr-palm;
Golden the rest in faith inviolate shine.
From lands of snow-strewn fir, or vine, or palm,
Cold North or genial South; from where the bay
Darkens to Calpe's frown, to the great calm
Where from a waveless ocean dawns the day,
Comrades and kin they join, whose high disdain
Of earth disclosed to life the excellent way.
With those as men they served in equal pain,
Equal in glory now; lovers and loved
Lords of one realm till the great end they reign.
The crimson ensign theirs, the sign approved

"Of life-blood given for love, from rash reproof
And partial blame by righteous meed removed."
I looked; from the near gate to where aloof
Outstretched the city walls, in flickering fires
Frequent the pennons gleamed from roof to roof.
As when slow drawn in ever-narrowing spires
Led by the Scorpion sign, from Northern day
To the lone South compelled day's lamp retires,
O'er icy depths of night in ceaseless play
Now dazzling white, now green, now crimson red
At will the Polar witch-fires pass or stay,
Such was the flickering show; while with slow tread
And watchful eyes intent the gates of gold
Joyous I passed, by love's sure guidance led.
O happy gates, set to love's central fold!
O happy fold, love's guarded citadel!
Thrice happy flock, love's first-fruits here enrolled!
But thou, my being's stay, my guide, if well
I thy behest have heard, and heard obeyed,
Give me in worthy verse the things to tell
By thee revealed, lest the prevailing shade
Of earth's exile, where from that glorious throng
Banished awhile I mourn, these lines invade.
Then where we passed the crowded streets along
And all were fair, all bright, I marked in view
Brighter and fairer some their peers among.
So have I seen, thick drenched in Syrian dew
By old Damascus' walls, with livelier glow
Some rose outbrave the rest in perfect hue.

The Roman soldier explains that such are those who kept faith to death, and were equal friends—The elect of Love in all ages come forward.

Scarce had his words their close, ere to the spot
Where paused our steps, two forms than whom more fair

Myron or greater Phidias sculptured not,
Drew nigh; ruddy the one, his clustered hair
Like sunbright ripples crisp; a lion's hide
Girt his strong limbs, unvestured else and bare.
Of darker hue and slenderer form beside,
Yet kinglike trode his comrade; a sad smile
Told of o'ermastered toil and ills defied.

Theseus shortly narrates his exploits; his journey to Hades in hope to release his friend Peirithous; their deliverance by the Supreme Power.

CANTO XII

My guide names other heroic friends—A smile from Infinite Love in finite Form entrances me—Many more go before us, until the light of Supreme Love strikes down and blinds me.

My guide enumerates other hero-friends : amongst them Patroclus and Achilles ; Harmodius and his brother ; Orestes and Pylades ; Nisus and Euryalus. The souls pass by : a glance from one, described as "Infinite Love in finite Form," wholly entrances me. Then again I see the city streets, peopled by more happy souls : Ceyx and Alcyone :—My guide names Admetus and Alcestis ; Arria, and another Roman not specified ; then continues :

"WELL fares the land where the dear name of home
Honoured, all else upholds ; less firm beside
All other bond than ocean's drifted foam.
But happiest those in whom impressed abide
The seals of that high bond by heaven assigned
To the clasped hands of bridegroom pledged with bride !
The five-fold links that to their birth-place bind
Nations, to parents children, kin to kin,
Rulers with ruled, and friends with friends entwined ;
These knit th' enduring good ; in these begin,
In these their fullness find, in these remain,

"Who the true life from change and death would win.
O happy they, thrice blest, whom science vain,
  Nor pomp of idle show, nor restless pride
In change insatiate masked, nor greed of gain,
Nor vain conceit, to folly match and guide,
  Nor license rash, nor scorn of wiser eld
From Nature's ways and Love's have drawn aside."
Thus while he spoke, of sudden I beheld
  What seemed of infinite peace the chos'n abode
In a fair land by joy and pleasaunce held.
And as the place in beauty, they who trode
  That happy ground, their own: nor anxious care
Nor discontent was theirs, nor changeful mood;
But rest secure of garnered treasures heir
  Reigned o'er the quiet land, and ordered calm,
And life in love, and love in life was there.
This Nature's goal and purpose, this the palm
  Of truth o'er semblance gained, the prize, the crown,
Of earth's sore wounds last healing found and balm.

Absolute light veiled in darkness now comes down from the throne of supreme Love with entrancing power.

CANTO XIII

Waking, my guide bears me far away to a sea-shore—Here the Lustral Powers bide in their great Present, the mystery whereof human speech cannot tell—My guide now appears as a human Brother, announces that I have passed the perilous strait of my way, have made the true choice, and may go on further—All that I have seen returns to view: I recognize my spectral self; my follies of youth—My guide desires me to forget the past: all are inevitably subjects of Love, but after their nature bear his mark for good or evil, and meet their reward as predestined—The seven-fold Symbols reappear, with a glorious vision foreshadowing their ultimate repose who rise above things of sense.

The trance passes:

And now I felt, yet felt not, through the air
Borne in resistless swoop, as when their prey
From field or fold strong-pinioned eagles bear.
Till far behind fair land and city lay
To sight not memory lost; and now we staid
By the lone margin of a salt-sea bay.
Nor flashing oar nor sail were there displayed,
But the green desert of a fathomless deep
And the low shore-cliff's narrow line of shade.

My guide lays me down to sleep.

By this the morn
Had grown to noon, if morn and noon might be
Where never twilight died nor day was born.
Nor ever moon across that tideless sea
Her silver pathway drew, nor sequent hours
Traced in those skies diurnal registry;
Nor season here, nor throned in Zodiac bowers
A monarch sun; but self-contained and sure
Bides the great Present of the Lustral Powers.

The mystery of these is unutterable—I wake by the sea-side: a human form is by me,

a human voice
Attuned to love the lordship of command,
And thus the words were borne; "Brother, rejoice;
Past is the perilous strait; 'twixt false and true
Tinsel and gold, made thy determinate choice;
Henceforth with strength restored and courage new
Be thine with me the onward path t' explore,
Where through strange mazes guides the heaven-lent clue."
Thus while he spoke, all heard or seen before,
But most th' enchantments of the wide domain
Where Proteus Love his empire holds, once more
In clear reflex I saw; the bliss, the pain,
But as far off, I felt, and 'mid the herd
My spectre knew, twined in th' enchanter's chain.
And faint and far the Siren notes I heard
That erst had power to wile, an echo weak
Of foolish joys, by wise oblivion blurred.
And with hot touch of shame I felt my cheek
Suffused, that e'er such toys my steps had led
Substance in dreams and life in death to seek.

My guide tells me to quit thoughts of the past—All

beings are slaves to love, for good or for evil; all come to diverse homes "in the intermediate shade," as "prejudged eternally."

Thus while he spoke, as in the silvered glass
Form answers form, shade shade, before me rose
The seven-fold guardians of that entrance pass;
The banner waved, the proffered crown, the rose
Dewy with beauty's gems, the phantom shape
Swathed in the gloom of undistinguished woes.
These and th' associate forms that o'er the cape
Of limiting earth's last range where erst I stood,
Mocking alike attainment or escape,
Again before me ranged; again my blood
Alternate chilled and glowed; again the tone
Of a dread voice its warning note renewed.
While further yet, as 'yond th' horizon zone,
By rays oblique, reflex in present view
Of things unseen the semblant form is shewn,
False in itself, yet in presentment true,
So showed those heights beyond, a vision fair
Limned and enamelled on the infinite blue.
High walls, and domes, and towers were imaged there
Of stainless marble wrought, with jewelry
Inlaid, and golden spires, and sculpture rare;
And much I knew, yet knew not all; the eye
Uncertain made and doubtful part, confessed
Something that roused yet baffled memory.

These things, the guide tells, are the image and foretaste of the true kingdom, where—

With folded wings
There long desire has rest, no more to move,
By its own fullness stilled; all separate things
Blent in the one, the folding orb of Love."

CANTO XIV

The vision passes—We track the shore till stopped by a fiery stream—My guide explains that the next kingdom is ruled by a Sorceress-Phantom—We enter a gloomy mist, filled with sad sounds.

STAY, stay, thou glorious vision! or bid me fade
With thee to farthest depths, nor leave me lone
By hope deferred to faint despair betrayed!
Such was my cry; with tenfold lustre shone
A flash, no more; then closed th' unmeaning blue
Recordless, voiceless, o'er the glory gone.
But from th' horizon of my memoried view
The vision passed not; pictured there it glowed
In its own light; while hope and courage new
Through every limb with renovate fullness flowed;
So to my guide I turned, and hand in hand
Silent a space our onward path we trode
By the cool margin of the wave-beat sand,
Till by a stream debarred, whose wondrous flow
Closed from our hoped access the farther strand.
As from the depths of Aetna's Titan glow
The fire-flood bursts, its burning breath denies
Passage above, its liquid flame below;
Such was the barrier here; in mere surprise
Helpless I stood, and sought with outstretched palm
Shelter to my scorched face and blinded eyes.

Terrified by the fiery flood, I am assured by my guide of unseen heavenly aid; he discourses on our pilgrimage under shelter of a rock.

"Thou know'st the life in mortal courses pent
A sevenfold way pursues, as each, from birth,
Or custom's force, or chance, has ta'en the bent.
Ambition, Art, Love, Science, Sensuous Mirth,
Creative Thought, Religion's Empery,
Beacons or bale-fires of the sons of earth.
Each in this penance-realm by just decree
Lustration finds or meed, till ultimate doom
By long endurance set each prisoner free.
Seven portals these, seven paths, but one the home,
Their goal and thine, when to th' extremest bound
Of th' intermediate realm thy footsteps come.
Of the seven hills within the circuit found
Three hast thou seen, of noblest ends mista'en,
Like precious robes trailed on the sullying ground.
Ambition first, high heart and honoured strain,
But marred by personal will, as summer blight
Shrivels and taints the golden harvest grain.
And next, heaven's gift, earth's treasure, man's delight,
The painter's, sculptor's art, to common things
Too oft debased, and dwarfed by vulgar spite.
Last, the third realm, where Love's irradiate wings
O'er darkest shades are spread, worse mixed with best,
Dross with pure gold, and vilest slaves with kings,
Hast thou beheld; these on thy mind impressed
Yet fresh remain, these in the world of men
Shall record find, in thy true verse expressed.
Nor shalt thou see them more, nor turn again
Whence now thou cam'st, till for thy lustral need
Thyself art made this realm's brief denizen.
All these through good's excess from perfect deed
Have erred; but whom this chasm from those divides

"Have of defect or aim misplaced the meed.
Therefore the power through error's self that guides
To truth the true, has with all-purging fire
Circled the realm where darkest stain abides."
Then I; "Lord of my life, in whom desire
Is with fulfilment one, to whom is known
Th' unspoken aim to which my hopes aspire,
Tell me what error theirs, whom the dread zone
With flame has girt, what purport foiled, or how
Crushed in defeat their aim, or monstrous grown?"
But he with downcast eyes and furrowed brow
Silent awhile remained, as friend by friend
Questioned of what the tongue is loth t' avow,
Lest with the answer strange surprise should blend
Somewhat of doubt or pain; awhile he bides
Silent, then slow replies; thus he; "Attend,
Nor from the meaning swerve; the fiery tides
That front thy path, the realm inclose where pine
Whom to this loss the Phantom-Sorceress guides.
Ask not that Phantom's name; in many a shrine
She dwells, by many a land, from Zembla's coast
To the warm heavings of the tropic brine.

This Sorceress, Superstition - Religion in the widest sense of the word—unites gentleness and ferocity, pride and humility, good and evil.

Lifter of every veil; of every creed
She holds what seems the key, the mystery
Hid from all eyes, the page that none may read.
O grave of countless slain! O fathomless sea
Insatiate most when smoothest spread! who most
Thy promise trust, the most beguiled by thee."
Sudden from speech he paused; for now the coast
Where stayed our steps, and all the sea between
And the near crags in misty shade were lost.

As when the sun-scorched plains, no longer green,
Are wrapped in rolling smoke, when reckless play
Or chance has fired the grass, so dense a screen
Shut all around from sight; but densest lay
The shroud where close before in downward flood
The guardian fire-stream sought the lonely bay.
And evermore meseemed as there I stood
Deepened the torrent's roar, and murkier rolled
The smoky cloud, blotched as with crimson blood.
And voices strange I heard, and sounds that told
Of bitter plaint; and ever rising higher
Clamour and shrieks of anguish manifold.
As when through Indian towns the wind-driven fire
Loud crackling speeds; with helpless cries the crowd
Palace and hall bewails and gilded spire
Whirled in red embers through th' unnatured cloud
Outblotting heaven's blue vault, and evermore
Fiercer the flame; so wild, so fierce, so loud
Uprose that storm's turmoil, till the firm shore
Our feet beneath, as hollow found and frail,
Trembled in act to sink; behind, before
Uncertain all and perilous; faint and pale
I to my guardian clung; but he the while
Unmoved the scene surveyed; not Himmon's vale
Had blanched with fear that cheek, or the calm smile,
Seal of high deeds, bid from those lips remove,
Or dimmed those beacon fires; nor force nor guile
Have o'er thy vassals power, Immortal Love.

CANTO XV

The Fourth Kingdom—This is a phantom region, indescribable—We gaze on the fiery stream; sweet music is heard, with one jarring note, resolved into final harmony — The landscape clears—In a vision a Form, seen before, returns; this figures the Religions and Superstitions of the world—I am speechless, and my guide bears me onward.

FROM far-off lands returned and customs strange
Of men, and monstrous forms of beast or bird
Unknown to native sight and homely range,
Questioned, the traveller oft refrains, deterred
By fear lest fact should fiction seem, and shame
Be for due praise on spoken truth conferred.
Such fear is mine when his command whose name
Untold resumes my life, the wonders shown
In the mid realm bids me in verse proclaim.
For all was phantom here, as colours thrown
On sunset skies of storm, or vaporous play
That knits and swift unknits the Iris zone.
A changeful world; nor sequence here nor stay,
But dream dissolving dream, and fairest show
By foullest crossed, or mightiest by decay.
This and what more behoved me then to know
In words that timorous sloth and faithless fear
Dispelled, as cloudless suns the fresh fall'n snow,

The Master taught; and more he told that here
My verse recounts not; for even then the eye
Insatiate made as deaf my heedless ear.
Nor may the teacher's words though wisest vie
With things beheld; nor hearing's sense engrave
Deep as sight's edge the seal of memory.
By the steep margin of that fiery wave
We stood with shaded eyes, as, upward flung
From depths unknown or poured from viewless cave,
Welled that dread heat; with deafened ears and tongue
Speechless, intent on the dread scene, of all
Reckless beside, close to my guide I clung.
As one whom venturous search from hall to hall
Of a lone palace-wreck at eve, has led
To a great chasm, where through the rifted wall
Mere blackness gapes and void; with cautious dread
Downward he peers, nor to th' uncertain verge
Adventures yet, nor moves his forward tread,
Lest the next step be death; so me the surge
Of the wide sea, but the red fire-flood more
Fast-bound a prisoner held, till chance emerge
Th' expected aid heaven-pledged, strong to restore
Freedom awhile withheld; and now the stream,
Now the hot smoke-wreaths fain I sought t' explore.
Then as through darkest clouds a watery gleam
The storm-drenched traveller cheers, or hope deferred
Shapes in mid woes some joy-preluding dream,
So from far distance borne, yet clear, I heard
Fitful at first, then constant blown, a strain
Sweet as in summer's eve love's deathless bird.
Of smiles with tears besprent it told, of pain
With pleasure woven in one, but more the pleasure;
And rest outlasting toil, and sunshine rain.
But evermore as through a blithesome measure

A jarring note renewed, a something there
Told of a baffled hope, and cheated treasure.
Then swelled the music more, till now whate'er
Had discord been, in whelming harmony
Was lost, as vanished motes in sunlight clear.
And now that sulphurous gloom, that smoke-wreathed sky
Changed to serenest light, disclosed to view
Extinguished fires, their channel void and dry.
While from the far horizon's stainless blue
Wide stretched beyond, what seemed a gathered flight
Of snow-white doves swift slanting towards us drew.
Or as in April heavens a cloudlet white
By the south wind in playful dalliance swept
Momently changing mocks the gazer's sight;
So was the vision seen, so swift it kept
Onwards its course, the while that music sweet
Around its path like a lithe serpent crept.
Me too that melody's witchcraft bound; my feet
Rooted to earth like hers[1] whose leafy change
The love that wrought laments, forbade retreat.
And nearer now revealed that vision strange
Was the cloaked phantom[2] of my earlier tale
Seen 'mid the guardians of the outer range.
But now distinct the features, raised the veil
From brows of dreadful calm; a face that seemed
Of marble hewn, as marble hard and pale.

Her dress and ghastly appearance: her wings spread out over Earth: mystic symbols and attendants.

Then thus the Master's voice; "The vision seen
By few, to few revealed, the hope, the dread

[1] Daphne, changed into the laurel when flying from Phoebus.
[2] See Book I., Canto xi., p. 57.

"Of a sick world, without disguise or screen
Behold in its own shape; the sorceress wed
Not to one spouse but many; doubtful birth,
Of Time's twin offspring Truth and Error bred.
Yet other garb and guise to sons of earth
Her oft presentment shows; a charm that makes
Of best and worst confused illusive worth.
But the higher Power that leaves not nor forsakes
Those whom eternal Love from the blind mass,
Nations or men, to its own portion takes,
Has to thy eyes upheld the secret glass
That true from false discerns; so through the snare
Spread for thy feet untangled may'st thou pass."
Thus while he spoke the phantom-haunted air
Darkened with myriad forms, that in wild dance
Entwined, with beauty horror, foul with fair.

Strange memories rise before me:

As one whom loss of blood or hunger sore
To faintness brings, around him stares to seek
Aught that may sense sustain or breath restore,
So I, with mortal vesture clogged and weak,
For weakness dwells in clay, in suppliant wise
Raised to my guide wet eyes and pallid cheek.
And he, 'twixt whom and me veil or disguise
Was none, with half-reproachful steadfastness
Turned on my face the sunlight of calm eyes.
Then as a brother's arm with clinging stress
Supports the fainting boy, whose faltering tread
And trembling limbs the frozen blood confess,
His hands he chafes, uplifts his drooping head,
Pointing where mounds and drifted snows among
Shows the hoped shelter of the parent shed,—
So in that wildering hour ere yet my tongue
Had framed its prayer in words, the heedful guide

Round me his arms with timely succour flung.
And through the spectre host on either side
Parted, as prow-cleft waves when fresh the wind
Drives the full-canvassed bark, their spray divide,
Unharmed he bore my mortal weight; behind
The fire-stream roared anew; in densest veil
Once more the smoke-wreaths o'er its path entwined.
Here let the verse have pause, and the strange tale
Borrow from silence rest, till I recount
Hid things made manifest in the midmost vale
Of those by pain made perfect, till th' amount
Of the just debt be paid, the sullied dove
In the pure depths of wisdom's lustral fount
Washed and made free where Life is one with Love.

CANTO XVI

Passing through a dense wood, we are addressed by S. Anthony—
My guide replies, and we follow him through a narrow path to
a gloomy shrine.

FROM the sweet sorceress[1] of Ogygia's woods
By timely violence freed, to the sad shore
Cimmerian, bathed by Ocean's sunless floods,
The Ithacan chief[2] by Pallas taught t' explore
What hidden things the shadowy world in death
From ours divided holds, and the dark lore
Known to the conclave of the vaults beneath,—
Profitless wisdom all, and atmosphere
Too chill for life, too thin for human breath,
Voices of evil purport, sights of fear,
And earth's warm love to hatred turned, or worse,
And the long winter of the cyclic year,—
So sings the Samian bard;[3] but more his verse[4]
Reveals, from the grey towers by Arno's stream
Exiled by unjust hate and doom perverse,
Who from Giudecca's pit to the mid beam
Of Life's eternal sun by wisdom led
In Love revealed the Vision all-supreme;

[1] Calypso. [2] Ulysses.
[3] Homer: *Samos* perhaps put by error for *Smyrna*. [4] Dante.

Who, mortal yet, on food immortal fed,
And drank the living streams, and with the flowers
Blossomed in highest heaven was garlanded;
To each such grace was given, to each the powers
That mould or mar the moulded clay, assigned
Part in the secret of the eternal towers.
Yet wider range and stranger forms of kind
To me even me displayed, this Pageant's rhyme
Must tell, for future years in trust assigned.
And all by childhood dreamed, to manhood's prime
Revealed, of later years life's harvest sheaves,
Attune the changes of the modulate chime.
And now through a dense wood, whose pleachéd leaves
Noon's glare to twilight made, 'mid drops that fell
Thick as fast-melting frost from sun-smit leaves,
But these were human tears, our way befell;
And evermore the sightless glades between
Tolled the dull clangour of a smitten bell.
Yet trackless all, so seemed, th' untrodden green
Spread to our feet, nor less the wood denied
Opening or guidance through the leafy screen.
Perplexed a questioning look toward my guide
I turned, but as in water shade to shade,
His face to mine with equal doubt replied.
Silent awhile we stood; around, the glade,
Wildered in infinite monotony,
Search to the eye, step to the foot forbade.
Then, as in thought who lonely sits, and nigh
No living creature deems, suddenly near,
No warning given, beholds a watcher nigh:
Wondering he scans the form, the garb, in fear
Kin to surprise, as fain to learn from these
What may the visitant mean, what message bear.
Such or more wonder mine, when 'mid the trees,
Where densest closed the boughs, a sudden shape
Came forth in quaintest guise; no quainter sees

Naples or Rome, when stands the crowd agape
At the processioned monstrous Carnival
By Tiber's banks, or fair Puzzuoli's cape.

The figure, S. Anthony, asks our right of passage — My guide briefly describes Egyptian asceticism as the parent of the monastic system, with all its evils, and announces the authority for our pilgrimage.

Then slow upraised his beckoning hand extended
Where through the densest grove, unmarked before,
A sinuous path the vale's steep slope descended.
No narrower track the panther opes, nor more
With winding bend perplexed, nor darker shade
In Ural's mine shrouds Scythia's buried ore.
Till where a level plain succeeding made
More easy way, midmost a grassy lawn
What seemed a shrine was to our eyes displayed.

In the twilight we see a grey chapel, with domed roof and narrow windows: the strain of music heard by the fire-brook here pours forth loudly, with a sound of many voices, whilst worship proceeds within.

As who for bathing dight by some deep stream
Stands at a doubtful pause, and eyes the wave
Fearful by act his purpose to redeem,
So by the door I stood, and the dark cave
Mistrustful eyed, though thrice th' Egyptian grey
With hand and voice signal of entrance gave.
Till on my arm I felt the Master lay
His guiding touch, as with a cheersome smile
Scattering my coward fears he led the way.
So hand in hand, free from enchantment's guile,
Entering we bowed beneath the dark alcove
Haunt of the unearthly powers, whose spells beguile
All save the chosen few, th' elect of Love.

CANTO XVII

We enter the chapel—On the walls are figured scenes from early Biblical history, from the Christian Church, from the Inquisition.

"WHATE'ER thou seest or hear'st of sign or word
Silent attend and note ; to dying men
So may thy song undying truth record."
Such warning fell, though whence I knew not, when
That chapel door I passed; the curtained shade
That entrance gave, behind us closed again.
Nor sculptured likeness there nor form pourtrayed
At first I saw, so thick the incense fume
In that half-darkness sight and sense dismayed.
As one on whom while living yet the tomb
By chance or crime has closed, awakening knows
Peopled with things of death the vaulted gloom,
Then saw I slow emerging, rows on rows,
Figures from floor to roof, and colours blent
Of pictured men and women, joys or woes.
Up the mid space with pausing step we went,
My guide and I, of the dense crowd aware
That stood or knelt in lowliest worship bent.
With vaporous heat and censer-smoke the air
Scarce freedom left of breath, and blurred and faint
With iris haloes shone the tapers there.

As on some chancel-wall or screen-work quaint,
Where by Icenian marshes[1] rest the twain
Who clothed in flesh my life, each antique saint
Shows by long years defaced and wanton stain;
Yet undefaced the childish memories
That in my heart deep-graven by love remain.
And now to that half-night our customed eyes
Attempered grown, could each by each behold
Things erst confused in darkness and disguise.
There on the left-hand wall the legend old
Of Syrian annals writ; a world from nought
Fashioned, in seven brief days its work unrolled.
There light from darkness sundered, waters brought
To gathered seas, and all that earth of life
Or heaven of brightness holds, in course was wrought.
And, masked in serpent guise, the primal strife
In Heaven begun, resumed in Eden, showed,
And that ill-tasted tree with poison rife.

The Deluge and a few scenes recording human crime and misery from the Old Testament are briefly noticed.

Of later years the scenes I there descried
As of a second world unlike the old,
Fair as the new-winged insect's summer pride.
In robes of many hues and circling gold
Martyr and virgin forms 'mid angel shapes
And heaven-raught palms, and holiest names enscrolled,
A long procession ranged, in priestly capes
Wide-flowing, or monkish cowl, and hermits hoar
On mountain summits lone or jutting capes.
There I beheld who[2] on the Libyan shore

[1] Sir Francis and Lady Palgrave are buried in the village churchyard of Irstead, in East Norfolk.

[2] S. Augustine.

To Cato's martyr-memory consecrate,
Kindled the quenchless torch of Hippo's lore.
And next in place, though later found in date,
Two cloistered shapes I saw, from Clairvaux' bower
One,[1] from Aquino's crags his laurelled mate.[2]
But most the giant twain, to whom the power
Was given the crumbling shrine of priestly Rome
Firm to up-prop, till past the perilous hour;
Where on Galicia's rocks th' Atlantic foam
Its saltness breaks, thence the stern leader[3] came
Who fenced with word and deed the Fisher's tomb.
And linked with his in equal praise the name[4]
By sandalled myriads borne, a seraph band
Who for their own Alverno's mystery[5] claim.
And last but mightiest he[6] whose high command
Given in the Name of Power, what prostrate lay
Upreared, the broken linked in healing band.
But where in tremulous gleam the tapers' ray
From moulded gold and gems reflected shone,
A fairer prospect wooed me to delay.
Here with calm eyes fronting the Tyrant's throne
Stood th' Alexandrian maid[7]; the torturing wheel
Shivered by angel-might beside was strown.
And 'mid the full-swollen pomp of proud Castile
In poorest vestment clad, Heaven's cloistered bride[8]
Bore on her heart impressed the bridegroom's seal.

Horrible visions of the Inquisition follow, and I hasten onward.

[1] S. Bernard.
[2] S. Thomas Aquinas.
[3] S. Ignatius Loyola.
[4] S. Francis.
[5] The sanctuary where S. Francis received the *Stigmata*.
[6] Presumably Hildebrand, Pope Gregory VII.
[7] S. Catharine.
[8] S. Teresa.

CANTO XVIII

In the chancel I see symbols and visions of the birth and progress of Christianity.

We enter the chancel, where the Cross is the only symbol seen,

Reared on earth's central mound, when noonday night
Hid from a trembling world what else had been
As lightning's scathing flash to th' upturned sight.
A life transformed in death, a glory seen
In murkiest gloom, an earthly Form with heaven
Instinct:

A vision revealing mercy united with wrath, despair with hope, "and more than thought can reach."

From the dim margin of a silent shore
Who morn by morn has journeyed, purpose-led
What inland lies of some new realm to explore,
Till all his travel-mates outgone or dead
Alone he stands, where from the shelving ground
Wells forth a mighty river's fountain-head,
Ice-cold and crystal clear, a grassy mound
Scarce marks the spot; yet hence the waters flow

Whose giant course nor climes nor empires bound.
Silent he stands and thinks how far below
Lie the wide plains and feathery groves of palm
Where these cool streams in torrid sunlight flow.
How all unlike these mountain heights, the balm
Of mountain flowers, to where the ship-thronged river
'Mid crowded quays meets ocean's muddy calm!
How sullied there, how stainless here, yet ever
Though thus transformed the same: distance nor change
Can from their fount these far-flowing waves dissever.
Yet to the crowds who by the populous range
Dwell of the full-swoll'n stream, where broad and deep
Seaward the wharf-girt waters pass, how strange
Were the small rivulet cold and pure, the steep,
Th' untrodden grass, whence to the haunts of men
Down heights unknown the gathered waters leap!
So tranced I stood, so lost in musings, when
Of the great Power that o'er the earth has gone
Conquering and moulding all, before my ken
Revealed the Source I saw, the glorious One,
The visible God, the King by twofold birth
High o'er all kings, as o'er all thrones his throne.
Lowest and loftiest of the sons of earth,
Son of the Eternal Love; compared with Thee
All loveliest things nor beauty have nor worth.
A mist-enfolded star, a Deity
Through human limbs diffused;

By man how sadly despised and mistreated!

O flower of Jesse's line! how rough the stem
That bore thy blossomed grace! how sharp the thorn
To that true Eden hedge and diadem!

Thus while I mused, as cross a doubtful morn
In the low East a rising cloud with rain
Black, or upgathered hail is quickly borne
On angry winds of storm, till all the plain
Where full-eared hopes even now with yellowing green
Shone to the dawn, in darkness fades again,
So round that awful Form where anguish keen
Was one with keener Love, a murky cloud
From earth uprising wove a crape-like screen.
And masks of purport new, a motley crowd
Stranger than opiate dreams, of imageries
In mitred pomp and broidered vestment proud
And more than kingly state; in coarsest frieze
Others of various dye, and banners wrought
Fluttered with symbols quaint, and crowns, and keys,
And visions these betwixt than human thought
Loftier and purer shown, and eyes to heaven
Upraised, and smiles, foretastes of what they sought,
And bliss supreme 'mid earth's worst sufferance given,
And joy in anguish perfect made, and pain
To pleasure turned, and roughest ways to even.
As woven in myriad dyes a silken skein
Grows to a dazzling web, where first and last
Sequence and form the gazer seeks in vain,
So was the shifting veil that dense and fast
Rose from the temple floor, till all beside
Invisible grown to mere effacement passed.
In mind as sight perplexed, to my true guide,
Who constant stood beside, I turned to seek
What might of good or ill that change betide.
Stern was his look; to marble blanched his cheek
Of sorrow told and awe; his lifted hand
Summoned expectance yet forbade to speak.
And denser now than erst th' adoring band
Gathered about the shrine, and thick the steam

With phantoms wove an eye-perplexing strand.
And false or true or waking sense or dream
I knew not to discern, nor might divine
What the hid purport of th' enacted theme.
Then from that serried throng which filled the shrine
A murmur rose, as when th' upgathering storm
Sends its hoarse herald through the mountain pine.
And where concealed awhile that royal Form
In god-like anguish calm enshrouded stood,
Hid by the gleams that dazzle and deform,
A light obscure of crimson tinge like blood
Spread from beyond the veil, from floor to roof
Filling the fane as with a whelming flood:
Till in its glow th' illusion-painted woof
Melted to formless haze; and midmost there
Like the red star hung in mid heaven aloof
An angry Presence glowed; around the air
Quivered, and with responsive tremor shook
Altar and shrine and walls and sculptures rare.
As who perplexed in some great Master's book
Looks to resolve his doubtful mind, so I
Bent on my guide again th' enquiring look.
But in his face even such expectancy
As in my own I knew, though nought of dread
Was there, but fate's presage in purport high.
As when in distant street the measured tread,
With martial music heard, to the great crowd
Preludes the victor King's approach, each head
Is turned whence comes the sound, like wheat-fields bowed
By harvest-winds one way, on every mien
One thought, one hope, one vassal fear avowed.
Till now where reddest glowed the vaporous screen
O'er apse and altar shed, a Form of old
By the lone seer of exiled Patmos seen,
In His own likeness stood; as burnished gold

In sevenfold furnace fiery made, than snow
On Alpine peaks more white the vestment's fold.
But to that Face the sun's meridian glow
Had rayless seemed and pale; the lightning gleam
Matched with those eyes a fire-damp's flickering show.
And where His feet were stayed, a fiery stream
Issued and flowed resistless; and afar
Seven lamps of fire sent forth a quenchless beam.
And in His open palm a sevenfold star
In azure lustre shone; and His keen breath
Was as a falchion's edge made sharp for war;

The evils whereof are seen behind Him. Yet

His brows around
All-conquering Love had bound the victor's wreath.
With highest power, with deepest anguish, crowned,
In each supreme He stood; His blazoned sway
Nor cyclic years nor secular orbits bound.
As in mid noon-day's tower some meteor ray
Of the eighth heaven portentous denizen
Blots with excess of light the natural day,
So earth's connatal powers, the gods till then
Believed, adored, by th' all-eclipsing Cross
Blurred and effaced passed from the world of men.

Lament for the lost youth of humanity.

CANTO XIX

The building vanishes—My guide narrates the disappearance of the Pagan deities, and the rise of Hope and Fear to rule in their place—Praise of Paganism—A vision of early life and later creeds promised.

The shrine and all about it vanishes: my guide alone remains.

THEN I; "If thine to tell, O Master! say
What means that painted shrine, the pageant rare
A moment shown, then dream-like snatched away.
If true, why cancelled thus the semblance fair?
If false, by whom ordained? from love or hate
The boon? in hope perfected, or despair?"
Then he; "The Powers that o'er man's earthly state
For good or ill preside, from first to last
Fortune or chance by you misnamed, or fate,
Each in his day prevails, while to the past
The present still succeeds, as o'er the slope
From gliding clouds quick shadows pause or pass.
Eternal they, yet kin to earth; their scope
Is aye to earth proportionate found; its measure
No wider range to fear allows or hope,—
Fortunate isles, Elysian fields of pleasure,
Or dark Cimmerian caves, and streams denied

"To perjured thirst, and harpy-guarded treasure.
Yet as the tales at evening told beside
The cottage hearth, full oft in fancy's loom
True deeds inweave, hidden or travestied,
So 'neath the fabling talk of Greece and Rome
In scant disguisement veiled of prose or lay
Th' eternal purport hides, reward or doom.
These the fit birth-gifts of the natal day
Which welcomed man new-born; with these content
From morn to eve to wend life's pilgrim way.
Till from a Power unknown but mightier sent
He came, the conquering Lord, who that fair veil
Of earth-woven hopes and fears asunder rent.

Paganism then passes away:

Silent th' oracular caves; the ocean's floor
Untracked by Tethys' wheels; untenanted
Th' Olympic heights and Ida's summits hoar.

In its place two mighty forms overshadow man—Hope and Fear. A blank, godless age is prophesied for the close.

Yet not in vain the past, nor all deceived
Who erst those shrines adored; the faithful heart
Abides of its sure guerdon unbereaved.
But happiest they who with their birthright's part
Contented, seek no further range, nor borrow
From worlds unknown vain solace, vainer smart:
From life's to-day forecasting life's to-morrow
As from the bud the leaf, whate'er betide,
Sunshine of surer bliss, or clouds of sorrow.
All these in peaceful state their hour abide
Who from earth's earliest dawn to evening grey
Have their first pathway kept, nor turned aside

"To the fond beckonings of a gaudier day.
These too shalt thou behold, and tread the vale,
Fabled or real, of Mantua's elder lay.[1]
These past, another realm, the margined pale
To later creeds assigned, shall to thy view
Their portioned meed, blessing or doom unveil.
There as th' optician's art in sevenfold hue
Untwists the skein of common light, thy glance
Shall foul from fair dispart, and false from true;
Such power I now confer; Athena's lance
With less discerning touch the Titan host
Wide scattering, roused the gods from fateful trance.
And these beyond whom th' Erythraean coast
And Mecca's vale sent forth, a name to none
Second for ill, Arabia's prophet-boast;
With him the turbaned crowd whose empire won
O'er tottering Cross and phantom throne, even now
Flaunts its proud Crescent to Byzantium's sun.
And further yet what later creeds avow
Of undeterminate power, a fancied soul
Of all that is, nor personal Rule allow,
Find their allotted place, till reached the goal
To them, to all, assigned, where reigns above
Th' eternal Truth, the absolute Life, the pole
Of the all-containing orb, the central Love."

[1] Virgil's *Sixth Aeneid.*

CANTO XX

In a lovely landscape we reach the Fountain of Youth—I bathe in it, and my eyes are opened to the fair inhabitants of the region; Olympus rising over all, peopled with the gods of Greece, India, and Ethiopia—Glimpse of the infernal regions—Rhapsody on ancient Hellas and her deities.

O HAPPY Spring, than Summer's blossomed pride,
  Than Autumn's wealth more fair! O happy Spring
Of renovate earth the bridal veil and bride!
There is no joy like thine; each loveliest thing
  Is tarnish-dimmed save thee; thou only shinest
For ever new, unbruised by Time's rough wing.
The emerald sprays, the starry flowers thou twinest,
  Youth's mirrored self, beauty's embodiment,
Are thy fit crown, of all divine divinest.
—Now through a blossomed mead my footsteps went
  With him, my constant guide; and all around
Breathed the cool air a many-perfumed scent.
And little hills with plumy verdure crowned
  Bordered the way; and the many-throated song
Of garrulous birds made answer to the sound
Of rippling streams, hid their fringed banks among,
  And over all the cloudless hyaline
A myriad sparks of living brightness flung.
A land of perfect peace; a land of vine

Olive and corn and fruits and sheaves; a land
Of life with youth twin-fashioned haunt and shrine.
As budding twigs by April breezes fanned
Put forth their leaves in gladness, so renewed
In sense and heart that loveliest scene I scanned.
Yet not by plain nor hill nor stream nor wood
Could aught my circling eyes discern, to tell
What dwellers owned this seeming solitude.
Then to my guide I turned, the oracle
Of sure response, the torch whose steady ray
Could every darkness raised of doubt dispel.
And thus; "Guardian and guide of these my ways
Through the mid-lustral realm, what blest sojourn
Is this? to whom assigned the blossomed maze?"
Then he; "By yon cool glade where densest fern
With harebells blends its fronds, and primrose pale,
Shalt thou to what thou ask'st the answer learn."
Then with slow steps as who some ancient pale
Of reverent worship trod, our way we bent,
He first, I following through the margined vale,
Till in a glade we stood where twined and bent
Tall branches screened the day; a stream before
By grass and stems in liquid coolness went.
"That which thou seek'st," now spoke my guide, "the lore
Hid from a world grown old, the primal truth,
Gospel of grace to man, the gods of yore,
Here be it thine to know; the stains uncouth
Of earth's decrepit years, the dust of time
Cleansed in the stream thou seest, the fount of youth."
Not with more eager haste in Nubia's clime
The herdsman parched and lone, if chance he hears
From the far well the bucket's clanking chime,
Urges his camel's course; athirst his ears
Drink in the welcome sound, that farther still
Seems from his fierce desire the more he nears,

Than at the Master's words a sudden thrill
Of longing mixed with pain my mortal frame
Pierced, and compelled to his my thought and will;
That had the stream in place been liquid flame
Nought had it stayed my forward plunge, or bent
From its resolve a moment's space my aim.
But fresh as mountain breeze the element
Closed o'er me where I sank, then to the air
Restored me with new power and life besprent.
Smiling my Master welcome gave, and there
Laid on my eyes his hands, when all around
Groves, plains, grass, flowers, in sight transfigured were.
Not lonely now nor mute, with music's sound
Breathed the low winds responsive; forms divine
Some with mere beauty, some with aureole crowned,
Or wreathed with fadeless flowers or tendrilled vine,
Moved on the lawn, or the tall trees between
Shone, as large stars from clouds emerging shine.
Nor these alone, but o'er the mounded green
Maidens and youths and hero forms, and boys
With laughing girls beside, a motley scene;
Some linked in earnest talk, some to glad noise
Of flutes and cymbals lightly passed, and some
Loitered in smiles and jests and amorous toys.
And overhead in many-coloured loom
Of living forms it seemed, height over height,
Converse of earth uprose th' Olympian dome.
Infinite beauty matched with infinite might,
And each to each reflex, as cloudless skies
Give and receive great ocean's tremulous light.
For there th' earth-ruling powers, the deities
In happier days known and adored, their court
Once more an hour displayed to mortal eyes;
Erst on Olympus' peaks, fitting resort
To man's proportionate gaze, or fabled more

Meru, or that far realm of old report
By lotus groves on th' Ethiopian shore;
Or throned in solar fires, as sign by sign
Given to each race its heaven-appointed lore.
In fabling tale, or song, or dateless page
Enshrined the heirloom given; but fairest far
To Greece assigned the luminous heritage.
Brightest and best of heaven-born lights; true star
Of morning risen on earth, precursor meet
Of the glad forms that tend Hyperion's car,
The perfume-laden Hours, the glancing feet
That weave the dance Pierian, and the grace
Threefold of sister charm and influence sweet.
There with swift lightnings girt in loftiest place
The Lord of gods and men [1] in calm serene
Bent o'er the kindred crowd his awful face.
And there in rainbow-circled state was seen
Large-eyed, in partner-state the Sister bride [2]
Olympian born, of Argos shield and Queen.
And there brightest and best in circling pride
Of his own fervent rays the Loxian god [3]
Monarch of day, stood the great throne beside.
And in glad youth, with winged swiftness shod
Fair Maia's fairer son,[4] in mirth entwined
With spells of power the light Caducean rod.
There in an hour of borrowed peace reclined
The warrior god [5] whose crimson planet bears
Like name, of old in Thracian fanes enshrined.
Him most unlike, stateliest 'mid heavenly peers
The Maiden wisdom [6] stood; with olive bough
Fruitful, in peace she leads the golden years.
By her the virgin huntress Queen,[7] her bow
In crescent silver clear, Heaven's wonderment,

[1] Zeus. [2] Héré. [3] Apollo.
[4] Hermes. [5] Ares (Mars). [6] Athena Parthenos.
[7] Artemis Seléné.

Beacon-like gleamed o'er Latmos' pine-clad brow.
And, loveliest, thou whom lone Cythera sent
The sea-born Queen of Love![1] the unparalleled
Centre and star of being's firmament.
All perfect deemed ere thee, all beauty held
Supreme in earth or heaven, from mind and eye
Passes, by thee resumed, possessed, excelled.
O visioned dome of a god-tenanted sky,
O'er a god-tenanted earth! of human hearts
Desire! nor all for human sense too high!
And other forms were there; thy quivered darts
Eros! and thy culled flowers, Proserpina!
And who[2] to heaven the nectared bowl disparts,
Rapt by the Idaean bird, and Saturn grey
Unthroned but reverend seen, and with his crew
Roseate in vine-wreathed car Iacchus gay.
And at the mountain's sea-marged base to view
Distant, yet clear, Nereus with Neptune joined
Drove his swart dolphins through the sparkling blue.
But in far depths uncertain, undefined
The hated realms with woe Tartarean fraught
Glimmered, a lurid dread by guilt designed.
Of love contemned, to vengeance changed, were wrought
Those iron gates of pain; love's righteous law
Righteously to revere, the lore they taught.
But soon the chasm reclosed, though the great awe
Awhile remained, then slowly passed, as chid
Might prowling beasts to shrouded dens withdraw.
And other mysteries once unveiled, but hid
From eyes profane of later ignorance,
In their own proper fullness unforbid
'Mid the great mount I saw; the Sibyl's trance,
The oracle-breathing gulf, Dodona's fane,
The rustling oak's response, the priestly dance,—

[1] Aphrodité.
[2] Ganymede borne to Olympus by the Eagle.

All these and else whate'er to minds profane
Meaningless things and void abide, to me
Shone in undying truth, nor shone in vain,
Of all that is, or was, or is to be
Mirrored in one reflex; as the bright day
In countless sparkles of the infinite sea.
Then as with ebbing pulse the solemn lay
From quire to quire replies, when thronged the fane
For a great nation's yearly holiday,
So at the vision's close a mingled stream
Of harp and voice from that Olympian height
Shower-like descending, rose from earth again,
Till sound, and form, and rainbow hues, and light,
And the fair vale beneath, and heaven above
One universe made, one being, one delight,
In the fair realm of life-incarnate Love.

CANTO XXI

A landscape in North-Eastern Greece—Apollo, Herakles, Admetus, and Alcestis are seen together—The two last tell their story.

FROM the great splendour of the early gods,
Earliest yet fairest they, my eyes I turned
To the cool solace of terrene abodes,
While yet th' o'erarching dome that conscious burned
With forms divine, like morn's gay hues by day
Yet unabsorbed, its living hues inurned.
But fronting where we stood, with olives grey
And terraced vineyards marged, and meadows green
Mottled with kine, Boeotia's [1] waters lay.
Untold the name I knew, and far between
Where tillage-patched the ground, and hamlet smoke
Curled in thin wreaths, were Pherae's turrets seen.
A land of peaceful days; nor trumpet woke
Echoes of war and fear, nor barbarous foe
Loosed the scared oxen from the ploughman's yoke.
Nor blight the springtide marred, nor parching glow
Of drought made summer bare, nor ray malign
Of thwarting star might fields or pastures know.
But flocks of silky fleece, and herded kine
And harvest-laden wains, and promise there

[1] Erroneously named for *Phthiotis*; the *waters* are the Gulf of Pagasae.

Of orchard gold and purple clustered vine.
These I beheld, nor from the prospect fair
Diverted thought, till as to gazing eyes
Sudden a star responds in evening air,
So to my view revealed in glad surprise
Beauty with strength allied in fourfold band
Showed as the polar pride of austral skies.

Apollo, Herakles, Admetus, Alcestis are seen together—My guide names their heroic deeds—Alcestis then narrates her wedded happiness, Admetus' death, and the appearance of Apollo; who tells her the conditions of Admetus' restoration to life.

"No more he spoke, nor need; no doubtful strife
Held my divided thought; alone my lord
Death-stricken I saw, knew but my name of wife.
O welcome more than to the sun-parched sward
Are summer rains, or to a mother's breast
Her only son from far past hope restored,
To me that sudden pang, from mortal vest
Disrobing my free soul, that joyed to know
Granted the prayer, fulfilled the glad behest!"

Love gladly submits to such loss—Admetus renders thanks for his happiness.

Thus while he spoke so grew the scene as when,
Seldom beheld, the zodiac heavens among
Four master planets greet the gazer's ken,
Yellow and red and white and crimson, hung
As in one lamp, while broad and bright the day
Widening beneath such upward radiance flung,—
Even so the wondrous four from earth's decay
To deathless heaven withdrawn, all change above,
Passed with that happier age; true mirrors they
Of earth with heaven instinct in mutual Love.

CANTO XXII

Vision of heroes of Greek mythology, and glorification of Greece.

O LOVED and welcomed most whate'er the eye
  Has first in love beheld, on which the mind
Has first assayed its hidden alchemy
To its own self transforming all in kind.
  Much we behold in after days, but still
In nought like these heart's true repose we find:
Nor charm of foreign clime nor scene has skill,
  Though decked in brightest hues, the soul t' enchain
As that first vision of life's fronting hill.
Such too his joy whom distant lands detain
  'Mid stranger speech, if chance the accents known
To childhood's ears renew the simple strain.
Even so to me those names familiar grown
  In boyhood's opening morn their welcome made,
In their own living truth substantial shown.

This was no phantom vision, the Gods existing still in power to bless or ban—A vast multitude of beautiful forms, heroes, matrons, virgins, is seen: Theseus, Peirithous, Hippolytus:

There too new lighted on th' Icarian hill[1]

[1] Ethiopian, according to legend.

He [1] who the tribute shame of virgin blood
Endured not, virgin-born in hours of ill.
And there unbowed unwronged beside him stood
In naked beauty clad with downcast eyes
The rescued type of spotless maidenhood.[2]

Io is also here, and Iphigeneia.

There too with serious mien like one intent
On deeds the thought disowns, and lustral wreath
Twined round her pallid brows, Electra went.[3]
Nor yet a mother's crime, a father's death,
Had all from memory past, though calm serene
Sat in her eyes and tuned her even breath.
And still, like light diffused, th' Athenian Queen
Was present there, and Phoebus' cleansing fire
Felt by the conscious sense, a power unseen.
And there from thirst unslaked of vain desire
The self-consuming soul of him [4] who deemed
All height attained but mounting step to higher,
Who from Chimaera's triform curse redeemed
Lycia, thy vineclad slopes, himself the while
Mightiest of men, yet outcast most he seemed,
Lord of the broad-winged steed,[5] by force or guile
Victor in scornful might; then phantom-chased
O'er the Alaeian plains in drear exile.
Here be thy rest, great spirit; the seeming waste
Of gems for earth too rare, in treasured store
Are gathered here, 'mid their own brightness placed;

And many more from Grecian lands.

[1] Perseus, son to Danae.
[2] Andromeda.
[3] Daughter to Agamemnon and Clytemnestra.
[4] Bellerophon. [5] Pegasus.

As 'mid the pleasant hills where rolls the tide
Of gathered Rhine some plots of happier ground
Bear a fine fruitage to all else denied,
Nectar of choicest fount, though nought around
The perfumed source reveal, or reason show
In heaven's aspect or local influence found.
Even thus all gifts the lords of earth bestow
On other lands, fair Greece, compared with thine
Are but as woodland fruits that common grow,
To the choice clusters of the tended vine;
For thine the natural grace, the loveliness
Of human life inwoven with life divine.
Till men with gods and gods with men no less
In just proportion moved, and each with each
Blended, a Psyché twined in love's caress.
Nor vaunt of nobler height nor wider reach
Than this has earth beheld, nor rival peers
Can subtler lore or deeper wisdom teach.
From throes of vain desire, from phantom fears
Exempt, in truth content, in truth complete
Was the great orb of Hellas' golden years.
Thus spoke the voice, and ceased; to music sweet
Changing the inarticulate close, nor I
What more I heard may in this verse repeat.
Then as in gathered pomp of pageant high
From door to tapestried dais some palace hall
Dazzles with myriad hues the enquiring eye;
Where silks and diamond sparks and plumage tall
In flickering movement blend, a shifting mass,
Colour and form and light from wall to wall,
Then to the orchestra's voice subdued they pass
In ordered range distinct, till perfect there
The figured dance its full completeness has,
Single with single poised and pair with pair,
Till all, confused before, by the sweet spell
Is woven in beauty's loom,—so swift so fair

The Olympian mount, the Aetolian citadel,
With all they held of gods and god-like men,
Nature's perfection, mountain, plain and dell,
To such a oneness grew that subtlest ken
Could naught misplaced discern, but last and first
From one derived to one returned again.
As a fair rose in some choice garden nurst
By earth and air, sunshine and diamond dew,
All precious things else separate and dispersed
Joins to one perfect orb of form and hue,
In its sole compass nature's best to prove,
Hellas! such rose wast thou; thy leaves bestrew
The ruined shrines of Saturn, Jove, and Love.

CANTO XXIII

The beautiful old world fades—My guide reveals its reappearance —We enter a desert, and see a Mohammedan army—Sketch of the career of Mahomet and his followers.

The spectacle of Hellas passes away:

And like a child widowed of brief delight
I wept that vision fair that nevermore
May gild earth's dwindling day or cheer her night,
Till the great winter's frost from shore to shore
Have frozen life's restless sea, and deadly chill
Pulseless abide the planet's inmost core.

I grieve with idle tears,

Till spoke my guide, "Why mourn'st thou? vain the tears
Shed for what fades nor dies, though changeful form
O'er the bright glass draw the dim veil of years.
Thick roll the mists of the ever-varying storm,
And bleak the snow-strewn path, but th' upper skies
Nor envious vapours stain nor clouds deform.
Twain are the natures, twain the eternities
Of gods, and men by gods beloved; nor time

"Shall dim their star, nor fret their Paradise.
Though rare and rarer yet the heights who climb
Where in th' assurance of inviolate Truth
Throne the high gods, with men as gods sublime.
The planet's secular spring, the bloom of youth,
Have from the painted canvass passed; but yet,
Though marked by wrinkled age and piteous ruth,
Abides the essential life, from the fierce fret
Of sect and creed secure; so sure, so deep
On the hid core the seal divine is set.
With this content abide, nor fondly steep
In vain regrets thy strength; rugged and long
Yet lies the path our destined steps must tread,
Even to life's utmost bourne, where temporal wrong
Fades as a noontide cloud, till all complete
Be the full measure of th' appointed song.
And short the fate-permitted hours, and fleet
The dial's passing shade, nor twice to man
May due performance with occasion meet."
Then I, "As on parched plains the breezes fan
A half-extinguished fire, so now thy speech
Quickens the emprize thy guidance erst began.
Thine to conduct, sole Master, thine to teach;
To learn, to follow, mine, far as the stair
May upward climb, or orbed existence reach."
And now our eyes before, level and bare,
Such desert spread as by Tchaeona's [1] waste
Fit margin makes to the Erythraean's glare.
Nor herbage green nor painted floweret graced
That desolate silence, barren all and dry
With pebbly sands and splintered rock defaced.
And from unclouded depths th' o'erarching sky
Poured down the heat that kills, and on the sand
Th' illusive vapour mocked the thirsty eye.
Thus while we went, far o'er the distant strand

[1] Apparently a desert near the Red Sea.

That in long ranges heaved, what doubtful seemed
If dust or smoke, approaching wreaths I scanned.
More and more near they drew, while through them gleamed
Flashes of steely light; and these among,
But higher raised, outslanted bannerets streamed.
Till through the dusty veil revealed a throng
Of swart-browed warriors tall with eager eyes,
Panoplied mail, keen swords, and lances long
Sudden before us ranged, from storm-vexed skies
As herded sea-birds sweep when to their flight
Refuge or rest the weltering wave denies,
Dark as the vanguard cloud of conquering night
In th' East upgathering wide, an ominous shade
Across our path, barring the onward sight.
Such was the phantom band, so broad displayed
Nor friends nor foes as yet, each horseman grim
As for brief parle a grudging period made.
Then with low voice thus spoke my guide, "Of him
Arabia's prophet son, whom first the land
From Syria's hills to Aden's ocean rim
Teacher and lord revered; at whose command
Of that fierce tribe the warring elements
Were each with each soldered in adamant band,
The shade thou seest; and who th' uncounted tents
Of Nejd and the far South, by that fierce spirit
Transformed to age-enduring monuments
Who the great fame or infamy inherit
Summed in thy name, Islam! a name of power
Alike to those who spurn and those who bear it.
O dark the noontide gloom and woe the hour
When th' unseen might in Gabriel's borrowed name
Bore the first summons to Khadjah's bower!
As falls on withered leaves the lightning flame,
The secular woods around to one vast pyre
Kindling in sudden blaze, so fateful came

"On that dark mind adust the daemon fire
From Calpe's pillared gates to farthest tide
Of sunrise seas remote; nor gilded spire
Of Buddha's holiest shrines, nor marble pride
Of Europe's worshipped cross th' inviolate sign,
Might unconsumed that fiery torrent bide."
He spoke, and pointed to the turbaned line
Of those who scant of pomp, in semblance rude,
Trampled to dust th' imperial Byzantine.
"Nor long ere Persia's jewelled multitude
Felt the keen sabre's edge, and Susa mourned
Her sacred fires, quenched in a priesthood's blood.
Thence from a conquered Orient Westward turned
The sword of God misnamed, till farthest Spain
Had the fit meed of tyrannous incest earned.[1]
Even to the Pyrenean, and the red plain
Known of Poitiers, where first the crescent moon
Of Mecca's heaven shrunk to unwonted wane
In the far West reversed; but all too soon
Renewed its fires, as some fell meteor lamp
Blasts with ill-omened glare th' astonished noon.
So with fierce cymbal clang and myriad tramp
Of Tartar steeds the hordes of Gobi's [2] waste
Poured on the fenceless lands their locust camp:
An Eden smiled their march before, defaced
And desolate all behind, from old Cathay
On to the bounds by Helle's waters traced;
Till from Byzantium's towers the latest ray
Of Hellas' lore divine and Flavian glory [3]
In blood and fire for ever passed away.
The rest thou know'st; the Danube waters gory
With Christian rout, Otranto's ghastly cry,

[1] Refers to the legend of Cava ravished.

[2] In MS. written *Kobi*.

[3] The glory of the best period of the Roman Empire; or because Vespasian made Byzantium a Roman Province.

"And lost Mohacks, and shamed Vienna's story.
But this deep graven retain; 'twixt earth and sky
Than this no deadlier blight the ill-matched pair,
Error with Truth, have given for progeny."
Scarce had he spoke, such clamours filled the air
As when the clarion call from tent to tent
Bids a great host for new assault prepare.
No God but God, the One, no message sent
But his, the Prophet Chief's, with wavering yell
Loud clanging o'er the pageant-heaven was sent.[1]
Each hand the sabre gripped, each visage fell
Lowered with intent of ill, as wolves at even
Glare on the traveller by the darkening fell.
Trembled the ground beneath, with gloom the heaven
Was grey, while shapes of death those ranks before
Flew like wreck-ominous birds by tempest driven.
Where now the smiles of Love, the joys of yore
By populous town or hamlet known or grove;
Where the fair forms of Rome and Greece, the store
Treasured for men beloved by Gods who love?

[1] *Sic* MS.

CANTO XXIV

Mohammedan heroes are seen in vision, and a final true Paradise is prophesied for them.

By Tigris' crumbling banks and Syria's plains
Who meets the whirling cloud that pillared high
With storm-swept dust the noonday radiance stains,
More wildered bides not in mid way than I,
Whelmed in that angry gloom where sound and sight
No aid could bring, nor hopeful clue supply.
And nature's self, of all that bears delight
Forbid where needed most, in senseless swoon
Sought a brief respite from that evil night.
Prostrate on earth I lay; not long, for soon,
As through deep waters dimly visible
Strange forms float upward to the magic moon,
So through the darkness blank and palpable
Of my tranced spirit as on a curtained screen
Rose the great forms of Islam's inmost spell.
Of fair presentment some; and some were seen
Stateliest of hero mould, and some with gloom
Darkly deformed, some with pure joy serene.
And first his pictured form [1] I knew to whom
By rightful heirdom due, by guile delayed,

[1] Ali.

Mecca a Lordship, Kufa gave a tomb;
Fourth of the Caliph line, yet first, thy blade
Two-edged on foes and friends was turned; by thee
The deadliest wound[1] in Islam's breast was made,
Cloven by that sword in twain; each moiety
Unites no more, but with strange life endued
Grows to new forms of dateless enmity.
Then as a ripple fades from off the flood
Faded that awful form, and in its place
Rising a diverse shape,[2] yet kindred, stood;
Midway 'twixt youth's first bloom and the early grace
Of manhood's prime it came; but foully showed
With blood the hands defiled, with blood the face.
Now less than man with anguish marred, a god
Irradiate now with conquest, like the star
Of demon name th' alternate presence glowed.
Herald of love divine, from regions far
An angel sent to earth, from fiercest hell
A power of dark deceit and ruthless war.
What legends strange unvouched, what secular spell
Circles thy name, what fruits thy blossoms bear,
Fairest and foulest Asia's pages tell.
Then as that image passed, the dusky air
Grew to uncounted forms, in vesture quaint
Such as in maddest hours earth's masquers wear.
But shadowy more and vague they seemed, and faint
The banners o'er them waved; uncertain things,
Despot or slave I knew not, fiend or saint.
To the drugged wretch no wilder vision brings
Poppy or henbane fell, nor denser throng
To Scythian field corpse-scented vulture wings.
And but the power of that enchantment strong
To slumber bound my bodily sense, amaze,

[1] The schism between *Shiites* and *Sonnites*, Persians and Turks.

[2] Husein, son of Ali.

O'ermastering trance, had done the vision wrong,
As North winds scatter clouds; but now my gaze
Was prisoner held, while that vague imagery
Grew to distinctness on the pictured haze.
There in 'mid circle hailed, with call and cry
Wearying the Meccan heaven, a motley band
Sole truth sole lord proclaimed their fancy's lie;
And some in pilgrim guise from land to land
Passed to the central shrine, where the fierce flame
Of Islam burns by yearly breezes fanned.
Others a servile garb and borrowed name
O'er wealth and lineage cast, from palace-home
Self-banished wanderers made, nor thought it shame
With outcasts vile and leper hordes to roam,
Scornful and scorned of earth, by weariness,
Hunger, nor pain nor death itself, o'ercome,—
Such power has love divine; though in false dress
Mis-trapped by fancy's wrong; and all awry
The aim, but sure the bolt, and true the stress.
For the sphered influence of the infolding sky
May be disguised, not quenched; through mist and cloud
Passes unseen the life-giving alchemy.
Then changed the scene; I saw where thronged a crowd,
Eager with hate and hate's worst hopes, beneath
A palace gate; above, the banner proud
Of stern Ommeyya to the sultry breath
Of Syria's summer waved; but in the hall
Throned gnawing pain and all too lingering death.
For there the warrior chief[1] whose sword in thrall
Levelled a subject world, from Calpe's straits
Dreaded to far Cathay's inviolate wall,
Helpless a captive lies; those prison gates
None may unlock but death, who day by day

[1] Uncertain: probably Musa or Khalid.

Nearer, yet slow, the torturer's bidding waits.
Yet on that face serene no shadow lay
Of anxious thought; no keenest pain or care
Traced on that brow the lines of hope's decay;
But in their place such smile as conquerors wear
When won the day, such radiance calm as grows
Of love fulfilled and compassed hope were there;
Nor the heart-sickening pang, nor keener throes
Of life's great purpose closed, nor doubt nor dread
Vexed the still depths of that entire repose.
Then was I ware of one who by that bed
In feigned compassion stood, the while his hate
On visible pain and death its rancour fed.
One who for vengeance long delayed and late
Had watched a tale of years, in hope deferred
Patient as hound before his master's gate.
Th' outwearied sigh, the moan of anguish heard,
Were to his ear sweet music; in his breast
Each sign of pain responsive pleasure stirred.
But he whose storm-tossed bark to the sure rest
Was hastening with spread sail,—and now the keel
Touched on that shore the haven of his quest,
Where other airs and other suns reveal
What earth-bound life denied,—on those around
Gazing, thus of long silence broke the seal:
"My God, my King, by thy acceptance crowned,"
Thus were his words, "my being's sacrifice
All I desire has full acceptance found.
Enough for me to live, my Lord, though dies
All other life with mine, enough for me
So God remain though perish earth and skies.
To be, if such thy will, or not to be
Is to thy servant one; thy reign beside
Nought I desire, nor hope, nor know but thee."
Then ere he ceased, as floods the rising tide
Silent but swift the sands, a radiance shone

From the far hills seen through the portals wide ;
Yet not of earth that splendour, nor the sun
Had in its glory part ; from far away
Beamed that effulgence of the eternal throne.
And in its light revealed, as breaks the day
Sudden o'er vale and town and height, when riven
Night's curtain, edged with rain by morn's keen ray,—
An earth all gems and living gold, a heaven
Vaulted with rainbow splendours, an abode
To victim love by love triumphant given.
There 'neath green shades of perfumed foliage trod
Singly or grouped in happy converse, they
By * men's * own kin disowned, avowed by God.
'Mid the cool garden shades and perfumed spray
Silent they passed or sate, and love divine
Clothed them as clothes a bride her pure array.
They from red clusters of the eternal vine
That flowered when Eden was not, with warm hands
In bowls elysian press the inebriate wine :
Not in Hesperian isles nor fabled lands
Arcadian, glow such clustered grapes, nor stain
With purple gleam Panchaia's [1] fragrant sands.
But ever and anon a magic strain
Trancing th' astonished sense, through the far trees
Came like a fitful wind o'er harvest plain.
And as struck harp-cords vibrate to the breeze
Faithful response to faintest touch, a tune
Noteless, all notes above, beyond, so these
Were one with that far music made, and soon
All separate thought, all will, all life were lost
As shadows lost in the universal noon.
And those who most fantastic showed, or most
In quaint disguise misformed, in that bright beam
Transfigured shone, fairest of that fair host :
And the deep trance till then that held my dream

[1] Virgilian name for Arabia Felix.

Passed as a morning mist, nor aught remained
Of all beheld or heard, my wonder's theme,
But a small voice and still, "The height attained
Not what they sought, but more, conferred; the dove
Awhile with erring flight perplexed, detained,
Has the true dovecote found, th' all-sheltering Love."

CANTO XXV

We are now in a lifeless desert, thickly strown with gravestones covered with mouldering sculpture—Here are materialist and sensual philosophers with their followers, Epicurus their leader —These are lost from existence—I grieve at this apparent exception from the law of purgation; but my guide promises for them also a final restoration.

As who from land embarked at eve, alone
Through darkest night where lamp or moon or star
Was none, on the damp deck his limbs has thrown
And feels the heaving plank, but near or far
Nothing discerns or knows, while the dumb hours
Muffled attend on night's slow-moving car
O'er the long arch of Tithon's joyless bowers,
Till broadens grey the dawn, and lone the sun
O'er a lone sea looks from his Eastern towers,
But friendly voice or sight familiar none
Is there that home recalls, but vapour chill
And the monotonous wash of waters dun,—
Then thinks, "If all the past of good or ill
Be but a fancied dream, no more, and I
Of shadows vain a shadow vainer still."—
Such was my thought when to the circling eye
That gazing sought, but found not, sign nor trace
Told of the vision's vanished pageantry,

But 'mid rock-margined heights an open space
Thin-streaked with yellow grass and grey with stone,
Showed as 'mid grizzled hair an eyeless face.
Nor motion there nor sound, save the low moan
As of a restless breeze that fretted there
Over some loved remembrance lost and gone.
Nor insect shape the soil nor bird the air
Furrowed with cheerful life; above, beneath
Emptiness stretched o'er empty land and bare.
"What land, what doom is this, where formless death
Unpartnered sceptre holds, where trace nor sign
Of life?" with stifled voice and difficult breath
Thus to my guide I spoke, his hand on mine
The while he laid, and with reviving cheer
Quickened my step where led the transverse line.
"Not as thou think'st," he said, "the place, nor here
Empty the realm and void, though likeness none
Greet the enquiring eye nor sound the ear.
This their fit rest assigned whose course was run
Godless to godless end, who life from earth
Cancelled, from earth the heaven, from heaven the sun.
For as a lifeless corpse of little worth,
A sunless sky, a flowerless mead, a feast
Spread amid tombs, of music void and mirth,
So were earth's visible show, or bird or beast,
Insect or herb or man, of that bereft
To whom each form, from perfect most to least,
Is but the apparent mask, assumed or left
By the hid Power, earth's viewless visitant,
Pearls of his dew, threads of his burning weft.
As to the sun the flower, as turns the plant
To the stream-side its roots, as yearns the boy,
Nor knows his yearning's aim to love's new want,
So all the years produce, complete, destroy,
Yearns to the hidden life that day by day
To each in turn existence gives and joy.

"But these by self-taught paths a joyless way
On earth pursued, from love exiled, their doom
Dull morn, unjoyous noon, and evening grey:
Till for the light their life disowned deep gloom
Quenched their unfuelled orb; of secular death
The valley this thou seest, th' unopening tomb.
Look round, but here delay not long, unneath[1]
Mayst thou th' invisible curse abide; nor here
Fit place for human heart or human breath."
As who when dank in fogs the dying year
Grows to its latest dawn, through misty screen
Sees wall, or leafless tree, or hedge outpeer,
So those grey stones and barren sands between,
At distance undiscerned, in nearer view
Tombstones of various shape and date were seen.
Not closer laid the lettered slabs that strew,
Yarmouth, thy churchyard sands, and o'er and o'er
The oft-told tale of shipwrecked death renew;
Though by no other beach the memoried store
Of wrong by tempest wrought such record have,
From Northmost Cape to Devon's rocky shore.
But different here the guise; on every grave
Not writ but imaged forth in form was shown
Whose the long winter of that godless cave.
For there no second spring; the harvest sown
In death, by death is reaped; the lords of being
Disowned by these, justly their lot disown.
Then to this region brought by just decreeing
A timeless date they bide, through ages slow
Earth's frustrate years and lustral dues out-dreeing.[2]
There 'mid those cancelled forms was mine to know
Outlined the shade of him for sage renowned
By sophist speech, and reason's empty show:
Who first a soulless world and empty round
Of atom chance and blind necessity

[1] Scarcely. [2] Undergoing penance for.

From Thracia's wold first brought to Grecian ground.
Then, as the fields when favouring earth and sky
To happiest crops combine, if with ill seed
Sprinkled, all rankest growths and worst supply,
So that ill harvest of malignant weed
Blighting the sense and mind, the land o'erspread;
A godless tribe, mocked by a godless creed.
"Here the vain crowd by Epicurus led
On varying paths, but frustrate all, attain
Not as they sought, the death that slays the dead.
With these whome'er dull heart and shallow brain
Prisoned in earthly sense, the powers they knew not
Know them not now for joy or penal pain;
Here on their native earth the flower that grew not
Grows not for them, but stony barrenness,
And slow decay, that secular years renew not,
Till from each Sepulchre-stone the faint impress
Of its dishonoured form by age on age
Effaced, have passed to utter nothingness.
A rayless sunless starless blank the wage
Of life from life's intent disjoined, a word
Blotted and lost from being's record page."
Thus spoke my guide, then ceased; but I who heard
The death pronounced on these, the stony doom
Whence no recall, with inward doubt was stirred;
And thus, "If to no voice, no hope, the tomb
Restore its guarded prey, no second spring
This winter show, no dawn disperse the gloom,
Say, my true guide, my lord, what might shall bring
Back to love's fold these wanderers strayed, and close,
Imperfect else, life's all-including ring?
Or shall love's crowning flower, the eternal rose
Of man's innumerous life, else perfect found,
Wanting of these, its full completeness lose?"
In doubt I spoke, with sadness compassed round
That aught by love to living conscience brought

Should fade, as fades in air a passing sound.
But he, my guide, in whose clear sight my thought
Even to its depths was known, from causeless grief
Of error bred, soon my delivery wrought.
And thus, "With golden corn the plenteous sheaf
In treasured store abides, while idly driven
By outer blasts is whirled the withered leaf.
Yet by one dew, one rain, one fostering heaven
Were both to ripeness brought, though this neglected,
Upgarnered that in balance scales uneven.
Honoured the life-sustaining grain, rejected
The barren leaf's decay, yet both one end
Upgathers last, till all by one collected.
So, for to thee 'tis given, thy vision send
Through cycled years of time, till closed thy gaze
Where to one point the lines converging tend.
Life's countless atoms there, th' unnumbered rays
Of orbed existence, first to least and last,
Make up the keenness of that central blaze.
There the dead dust of these, in ages past
Fashionless nameless long, to merest light
Transformed, as gold by purging fire recast."
Thus while he spoke, as through the frosty night
Shiver the wind-blown stars, the plain around
Glittered each time-worn stone with sparkles bright;
And as of opening leaves a rustling sound
Filled all the place, and 'mid the gravestones seen
Of those sad forms nor sign nor trace was found:
Till from my sight, as ne'er such things had been,
Vanished the graves, the plain; and pure above
The light-enwoven dome of heaven serene
Shone in the radiance of impersonate Love.

CANTO XXVI

Five Queens, representing different religions, appear: presently they are fused in one—She claims whatever has been good in Judaism, Hellenism, and Christianity.

LORD of my life, star of my childhood's dawn,
Sun of my manhood's noon, sole fountain thou
Whence the high verse by thee made mine is drawn,—
Mightier and more than when from the high brow
Of earth's extremest barrier burst the view
Of the seven lustral realms, be with me now:
For other verse and other strains are due
To what remains to tell; nor slight the task
That links with visioned shows the substance true.
But this thou canst and more; thy hand the mask
Can bind and loose at will, thy skill bestow
More than my thought can reach or purpose ask.
For not by Trophon's cave,[1] or Chebar's flow,
Or sea-girt Patmos lone, such vision yet
Painted in stranger forms its boding show.
From a green hill a changeful rivulet
Now clear now turbid ran; its banks beside
Five damsels throned in sequent order set.
Meagre the first and stern, her claw-like hand

[1] The Hellenic oracle of Trophonius.

Clutched on a written scroll; as one from old
Scornful and scorned, askance the rest she scanned.
Who next in order sat with gems and gold
A queen of nations seemed; but form and face
Were lost to view, shrouded in crimson fold.
And following her, but by a little space
Parted, and half averse, with sword and lance
Threatening, a dusky form was third in place.
But these unlike the fourth; her sunny glance
Of gentlest purpose told; the spring-clad mead
Has not the brightness of her countenance.
Gorgeous with gems untold and costly weed
Of strange device, the fifth on things afar
Intent, of those around took little heed.
Such were the five; o'er each a tremulous star
Now dim now radiant shone, with doubtful ray
White as fair peace, or red with crimson war.
And as the living fires at close of day
Frequent by Indian glades, now bright now dim
Alternate flash with blank eclipse, so they.
But the five sister queens nor eye nor limb
Moved where entranced they sat, changeless and still
Like marble forms in alleyed gardens trim.

My guide directs me to record the vision—I see these Queens like phantoms before a treasure-cave: as dancers move and intermingle,

Thus one by one those shapes, those colours gay
Dazzling the sense, those vestments mystical
Blended or passed, nor earnest all nor play,
But fused of each; for what the immortals call
Earnest is play to men, and mortal mind
For earnest holds the laughter of heaven's hall.

A strange dream that cannot be unravelled. Then, like clouds at evening,

So one by one those several forms descried
Each on her throne apart, in rival state
Of jewelled robe distinct and sceptred pride,
Collected grew to one, that singly great
Summed up the fivefold reign; to each the face
Like yet unlike, in a new power elate.
And the five thrones that erst in ordered place
Eternal seemed as those who sat, in one
But loftier far, were piled and wider space.
And the five stars in several light that shone
In one portentous flared, a meteor flame
Of doubtful days the dread prognostic known.
But she now throned aloft, sole Queen and Dame,
Whate'er those five divided held of yore,
Beauty or grace, or lustrous gawd, or name,
In her one self resumed, and corporate bore
Now this, now that, now one, now all of those
By her summed up, in power and Queenship more.
Veiled was her face; in her right hand a rose
Outshone the ruby's glow; her left a bowl
Filled with the draught which he who drinks it knows:
And cross her brows and round her arms a scroll
Writ with a Name of Power, and folded hung
O'er breast and girdled loins the mystic scroll.
And far the rose its heavy fragrance flung,
And ruddier glowed the star, while murmuring low
Like one in passionate trance her lay she sung.
I heard the words, I knew the strain, and thou,
Reader of this strange verse, if chance the strain
Thou know'st not, bide thy time till given to know.
This was the song; "From hunger, thirst, and pain,
Hunger for more than bread, and thirst that clings
Like Oeta's poisonous flame[1] to heart and brain,
To my spread feast, my fountain come; my wings
Shelter and healing give; in me the calm

[1] The poisoned robe which consumed Herakles on Mount Oeta.

"Of earth's unrest, the sum and crown of things.
Binding in me the bruised, the wounded balm,
The hopeless hope, the dying life, the dead
True resurrection find and conqueror's palm.
By me through thorn-set paths and deserts led
Who from earth's offered pastures turned aside
Have on heaven's grapes and fruits ambrosial fed.
By me from gilded thrones and marble pride
Of palace towers great kings in eager haste
Have passed to hermit cave and lone hill-side.
By me still cloister walls with lilies chaste
Outvie love's crimson rose; and caverned wells
Sweeter than wine in golden goblets taste.
For mine th' enchantments, mine the master-spells
That the red torments of the martyr's pyre
Can change to soothing dews, so legend tells.
From the first dawn when the star-spangled quire
Man's birth proclaimed in song, to the dim close
When thought and life in earth's last night expire,
Still shall the incense clouds, the steams that rose
From altars victim-piled, the hearts of men
Captive to me, the rapturous joys, the throes
Of a blind world, my changeless right remain,
Though changed full oft the scheme, in semblance new,
As one the moon if wax her form or wane."

Thus in the several phases — Judaism, Greece in the Golden Age, Christianity—has she presented herself.

CANTO XXVII

All nations are seen gathered round the great Queen, whose rays bless some and doom others—This difference my guide is unable to explain—Suddenly the whole scene vanishes as a mirage—The guide smiles, and I see a vision of the new Olympian Heaven.

If moments passed or years, where count of time
Was not by days or hours or dialled star,
He may alone declare who to that clime
From things that are not led to things that are.
His be my song to guide, lest rashly driven
Swerve from its course the memory's light poised car.
As o'er the wide encircling green when even
In stillness holds the land, a distant sound
Of homeward birds comes up the twilight heaven,
So from the hill-fenced marge that girt around
The spectral plain, where in proud silence now
Sat the great Queen with fivefold empire crowned,
Gathered a noise, and grew, from bough to bough
As sweeps the forest wave when first the breeze
Fitfully blows the leafy branches through.
And a vast crowd in banded companies
Thronged to that central spot from every side,
Thick as in summer-swarms the blackening bees.
And as the circling rooks at eventide

With clamour fill the grove, so now the cry
In dissonant tongues to stranger tones allied.
Hither from where the polestar keen and high
Reigns o'er the icebound North, to where the day
Holds in mid heaven his year-long majesty,
All tribes, all clans, from earth's prolific clay
Nurtured to human form; the motley seed
Of that strange life all other lives obey,
The sons of Europe's townships and the breed
Of Asia's houseless North, and where the wave
Casts on reef-margined coasts the ocean weed,
And where to brigand Spain the Italian[1] gave
A world to spoil and waste; and, choked with sand,
Where yawns 'mid arid rocks the Libyan cave,
And where her long-haired sons the Serian land
Guards with protective fence, and where the morn
Risen from the deep, Japan, first greets thy strand;—
All these, as yellowing leaves by tempest torn,
From Autumn boughs were gathered here, and stayed
Thick as on English fields the serried corn.
But these in circles ranged a halo made
Round her, Queen of their night, in mystic change
Each beyond each in various robes arrayed.
For crimson those who of that pageant strange
Nearest the throne were placed; a second space
Gathered in snow-white robes the outer range.
And some with mighty gold, and some with grace
Of green or heavenly blue, and circling these
With duskier garb some held the outmost place.
With eyes upturned, spread hands, and bended knees
They girt the worshipped throne, as those who wait
Doubtful, yet fixed t' obey, their lord's decrees.
Then was I ware that from the central state
Of her, that kingdom's Queen, a several ray
Where light with darkness blent and love with hate

[1] Pope Alexander VI.

To each and all was sent: the human clay
Touched by that shaft ethereal grew, the stain
Of earth by that quick fire was purged away.
O happy those and blest, for little pain
Guerdoned with joys untold, whose glories writ,
Martyrs or saints, in fadeless light remain!
But some by the same shafts with darkness smit
In evil guise were changed, a ghastly gloom
For nightmare shades and maniac horrors fit.
And still my wonder grew what secret doom
Made of that goodness ill, and why the light
To these deliverance wrought, to those a tomb.
Then thus my Guide; "The doubt thou own'st aright
None may resolve, till stayed the sequent years
In that last hour that day is not nor night.
Nor meteor gleams of hope, nor shadowed fears
Vex the unsullied calm, the speckless glass
Where mirrored love in formless truth appears.
Not thus what now thou seest, the gathered mass
Of earth-born evil and good, the phantom throng
Beauteous or foul; nor bide they long, but pass
As rifted clouds low driven are hurled along
In monstrous forms outstretched, that beast, or bird,
Or stranger shape, present when winds are strong,
Or the answering echo of an uttered word
Distort t' uncertain sound, by those below
Listening, as fancy bids, diversely heard.
Not more, while here our feet, is there to know,
Nor mine in words to tell; what hid remains
Of loftier mount, a mightier power must show."
Thus while he spoke, as spreads on Syrian plains,
Of noontide-steam compact, the imaged lake
That with false hopes mocks the faint traveller's pains,
Where rocks and sand-heaped slopes and clustered brake
In form distinct are seen, and all around
Hills, stones, trees, sands, in tremulous ripples shake;

So that vast plain, the throne-uprearing mound,
And she who thereon sat, and they who prone
Worshipped to the far sight's extremest bound,
Wavered in flickering lines, till one by one
Each vestment quaint, each form, each symbol token
In a vague mist wrapped and dissolved were gone;
Frost-work by the slant sunbeam thawed and broken,
Smoke-wreaths at noon by rising winds disparted,
Meaningless words in crowd or market spoken;
All things of semblance fair untimely thwarted
By time or fate's decree, earth's spring by frost
Untimely nipped, hope frustrate, joy departed
Here seemed in that great wrack; the promise most,
Least the performance found; the solid frame
Night's phantom morn-dispelled, a fleeting ghost.
As one with sorrow part and part with shame
Smitten I saw and wept, unmindful all
Whither my path, or where, or whence I came.
There had I long remained, so dark a pall
O'erspread my heart and brain; nor from the place
Had I removed, to mere despair a thrall:
But as on his shamed child a father's face
Is bent in pitying love, where anger none
Though much of grief, as for half-shared disgrace,
Even with such love, so sad, so helpful shone
The pitying smile of him, my lord, my guide,
Through the thick curtain of that darkness lone.
I looked; the mists that veil, the clouds that hide,
The phantom state, the truth in fiction held,
The shrine misdeemed, the falsehood deified,
All these like night's ill dreams by morn dispelled,
Seen in that sunlike smile, that countenance
Perfect in beauty, scattered were and quelled.
Then turned on me the life-giving smile, the glance
Known to my renovate life; an instant there
Oped the far portals of the Olympian trance.

As height surmounting height the marble stair
In long succession upward winds, till won
Thy topmost pride, Milan,—so steep, so fair,
Rose the ascent to where what earth begun
And marred, renewed I saw; till, reconciled,
Semblance with truth and gods with men were one.
With greener graves, with bluer mountains, smiled
Another Hellas there, with lovelier shapes
Peopled, by no false love from truth beguiled.
A mightier Pan was there; by summer capes
A new Dioné gleamed; brighter the flowers,
Ruddier the fruits, purpler the mystic grapes.

There too was revealed the King and Conqueror, God and Man:

And here the priceless pearl, the Mother Maid,
Lily and rose of earth, of heaven the gem,
Goddess and Queen of gods and mortals made.
And these beside, as round the central stem
Clusters the petalled flower, in scent and hue
Flawless, complete, a self-crowned diadem,
So those great spirits divine, faithful and true,
In many fanes enshrined, by many a tongue
Invoked, who to blind men the labyrinth clue
That heavenward leads 'mid scorn and worst of wrong
Have freely placed in hand, together blent,
Here tuned of renovate love the nuptial song.
As in a dream I heard and saw; the intent
In part I knew, but more the depths unknown
Veiled, as faint stars the day-lit firmament.
Such changeful scenes and strange the central zone
Of the lustral realms displayed, that to relate
In measured verse, or from my song disown,
I scarce can tell; but he whose word the gate
Of life and death unbarred, whose will to mine

Is rule and law, whate'er the deed await,
Bids me the tale rehearse; who lists the shrine
May enter free, free may the mystery prove
More often sought than found, the fount divine
Quickening dead earth to Eden life and Love.

BOOK III

CANTO I

The Fifth Kingdom—I have now passed the realms where the twin-powers of Life and Death reign supreme—A vast wall appears, over which an angel bears us to a fair plain full of light—I regret the less fortunate souls; a strain of music sympathizes with and consoles me—This is the kingdom of true poets and prose-writers, who also wait their final lustration.

PAST are the perilous heights where life with death
  Uncertain balance holds, the road so nigh
To heaven's own gates, so sheer the gulf beneath,
Where the twin powers o'er human destiny
  For good, for ill supreme, concealed from men,
Each the hid polestar of a visible sky,
Orbits of life and death, the pilgrim's ken
  Lead and mislead by turns; now each bright ray
Unerring guides, now wildfires of the glen.
But these and those are left; henceforth the way
  By easier courses led completes the ring,
The twilight border of life's lustral day.
But thou, Lord of my life, leader and king
  Of the bright troop where, formed in mystic sign
Latest revealed, the Four[1] their radiance fling,
Assist me now; so may the measured line

[1] The constellation of the Southern Cross.

Aright things seen record, as silvered glass
Reflects the shades that stain, the lights that shine.
Spring gales to budding trees, spring showers to grass
Freshness and life convey, but livelier sent
Through my dull soul thy quickening currents pass:
With thee, thou know'st, from my first hour was blent
My spirit's central self, my all; on thee,
As on his lord a slave, my eyes are bent.
Borne by thy might, as o'er th' unfathomed sea
Fleets the white bird of Austral storm, my song,
O'er all that was or is or is to be,
Shall touch the outmost bound, secure, nor long
The message given delay, in far-off years
Lesson and guidance to the mortal throng.
And now from the dread realm where boundless fears
With boundless hopes combine, our steps had gone
Where a high wall its girding barrier rears.
No loftier fence of brick with margined stone
From the mailed Tartar guards, as travellers tell,
The hoarded wealth of China's populous zone.
Then spoke my guide; "Who reared this barrier well
Their work have done; what lies beyond to gain
Nor venturous strength avails nor mystic spell.
Yet were heaven's mandate unfulfilled, and vain
The path our steps have traced, if thus forbid
Back we return nor the full course attain."
As by unlooked-for doubt perplexed and chid
In undertone he spoke, the while his look
To right to left enquired the passage hid.
But I who from the words uncertain took
More fear perchance than cause, his countenance
Scanned as a half-taught clown a printed book,
Nor what I sought discerned; though still his glance
Went and returned, as o'er some river wide
Unresting swifts pursue their circling dance.
Then with such sudden glance as meteors glide

From deep to deep, yet none from whence or where
Their course may tell, in Autumn nights descried,
Through the mute stillness of th' imprisoned air
Flashed a quick ray, so bright, the lightning beam
Ill with that blinding splendour might compare.
So flashed on Kishon's banks the harnessed team
That rapt the heavenward seer, its fiery glow
Mirrored an instant on that ancient stream.
But other here the shape; no locks of snow,
No age-worn form was here, but beauty's prime
Linked with the perfect life immortals know.
Such the lone shepherd boy [1] upborn sublime
From Ida's heights, while 'mid the rock-strewn plain
His flocks unconscious grazed the Phrygian thyme :—
Or the bright offspring of Jove's golden rain [2]
Who, Pallas-led, by Libya's haunted shore
Broke the dishonour of the virgin's [3] chain :—
Or who,[4] his twelvefold toil outwrought and o'er,
By guile not force o'ercome, the cleansing blaze
Of Oeta's self-lit pyre to heaven upbore.
Such, but than these more god-like, with bright rays
Crowned, who beside us stood; the timely power
Sent by the Will all other Will obeys.
Wrapt in that splendour round, o'er wall and tower
Light as the feathery down, by winds upwhirled
When changed to circlets hoar the purple flower,[5]
So light so swift our slanted flight was hurled
Far o'er the extremest verge, the fiery bound
To the great riddle of a wildered world.
Till on a meadowed plot of flowery ground
Where with fresh hues was green the grass, descending,
On grateful speech intent I turned me round,
But nought perceived, save with the daylight blending

[1] Ganymede. [2] Perseus. [3] Andromeda.
[4] Herakles. [5] Thistle.

A swift receding gleam, nor e'er anew
Saw I that form my fated way befriending.
Then spoke my guide; "In vain th' enquiring view
Thou strain'st, in vain thy thought; a vanished star
Hid and o'ercurtained by the noonday blue;
A nameless flower from nameless realms afar
Sent by the Love supreme, that mortal clay
Can lift unscathed to where th' immortals are.
Silent his power adore, and in thy lay
Grateful his deeds record; but most the boon
Even to the end with duteous toil repay.
For near the appointed journey's close, and soon
Shalt thou with us be one; till then refrain,
Nor mar with jarring haste th' unfinished tune."
Thus while he spoke, our path beside the plain
With pleasant hills distinct, and stream and wood,
So wrought in beauty's spell, that visioned pain
And fear and thought of ill, a spectral brood,
Vanished from memory's trace, as hosts of night
Chased by the day-star in his conquering mood.
For fair the landscape showed; the glowing light
Sparkled from grass and leaf, in light the hills
Went up from wood-girt base to crowning height.
In light the copses green, in light the rills
Like shredden silver shone, as natural joy
Through healthful youth, and life through beauty thrills.
Here sure the dreamed-of rest, from earth's annoy
Or penal torment free, the golden year
Nor memoried ill nor present wants annoy.
New born desire and need their contest drear
Have here in peace defined; Elysian shades
Or chance Utopia's dream or Eden's here.
Such was my thought while 'mid far opening glades
The turf-paved path we trod, where never leaf
Yellows to Autumn's touch nor floweret fades.
Till of that stillness born a secret grief

Rose to the thought, of those whose sterner doom
Late seen, from age to age delayed relief,—
As who with chaplets decked the loved one's tomb
Visits, and mourns the more, that crown nor wreath
Can bid the dead revive, nor sweet perfume
Prevail o'er damp decay,—till now my breath
Was heavy drawn with sighs, and the sad mood
Moistened with tears my downcast lids beneath.
The while in strange accord from out the wood
Came plaintive sounds and low, a plaint that told
Not as of present pain but absent good:
A vague yet true lament, a plaint of old
Heard and unanswered still, as by the swain
Unmarked the lamb's faint bleat from stony fold.
But this with sweetest notes the sad complain
Tempered to music's inmost soul, that none
Listening might scape the witchcraft of the strain.
All song of modulate voice, all concord won
From well-strung quire of men, with this compare [1]
Were as mere darkness to the noontide sun.
Then thus my master-guide; "How calm, how fair,
This portioned realm thou seest, in wondering mind
That aught of grief should these calm joys impair.
Know then to those, whom from the vulgar kind
The favouring Muse has raised, with various wreath
Crowning their brows, are these blest groves assigned.
The poets here, in whose recording breath
Live the dead deeds of men; or in whose rhyme
Love ever glows undimmed by age or death.
And with them here the garnered wealth of time
Who stored to later dearth, whose just award
Apportions meed to virtue, blame to crime.
And here the lords of thought, of wisdom's hoard
Who grasped the difficult keys, of heaven and earth
Scaled by their toil the heights, the depths explored.

[1] *Sic* MS.

"All these and else whoe'er of godlike birth
In measured verse or ordered prose have held
Truth's flawless glass to Nature's mirrored worth,
In part their guerdon find, though part withheld
Till cleansed each mortal stain, and pure the gold
From error's dross, and passion's mist dispersed.
And as earth's manifold wrong they mourned of old,
So now their own they mourn, while onward move
Slow-paced the lustral hours, till wide unfold
Th' eternal gates, the welcome smile of Love."

CANTO II

I am permitted to see Homer, Dante, Shakespeare; and in actual vision the scenes of *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, and *Divina Commedia* appear to me—A voice tells how Poetry passed from Homer through Virgil to Dante and Shakespeare.

He spoke; attent I stood, till gently laid
I felt his hand on mine, a warning sign
That of some near event announcement made.
The while with gesture quick where densest twine
The scented bay trees wove, his other hand
Pointing, to roused expectance gave th' assign.
Thither my eyes I turned, and soon a band
In regal garb attired, their forehead crowned
With empire's wreath for more than empire planned,
Forth on the pathway came; with fuller sound,
But joyous now, the music swelled, and glowed
With brighter light the heaven, with flowers the ground.
As who the reverence meet on rank bestowed
Or birth, or age, accept, so stately these
In their own worth complete the pathway trode.
"With downward brow, veiled eyes, and bended knees
Adore," so spoke my guide, "as who revealed
On some high throne the manifest godhead sees.
High as the mountain tops o'er pastured field,
O'er common mortals these; in these to men

"Are heaven's best gifts and last confirmed and sealed.
And first the Ionian bard,[1] whose equal strain
Of Troy and Greece the hero-gods with praise
Undying crowns; and ranked with him, the twain [2]
Co-heirs of sovereign song; the bard whose lays
Measure the world of men,—and whom from hell
To heaven's high throne Love led through every maze;
Creators each in turn, to each the spell
Given of truth's inmost hall, to each the treasure
Of love with life instinct, apportioned well.
The pulse of fresh-flushed youth, the ordered measure
Of years mature, the ebbing tides of time,
All hopes, all hates, all loves, all pain, all pleasure
Their work of witchery wove, as erst to rhyme
By magic chords and song from woven air
Rose the seven-portalled towers of Thebes sublime."
More if he spoke I know not, so the awe
Of those three mightiest spirits my every sense
Bound, that entranced nought else I heard or saw.
Not long, for now through heart and brain intense
A touch, an impress thrilled, that might the dead
Rouse ere the hour by life's omnipotence.
And as th' electric shock in circles led
Gives what its source retains, nor less the spark
Quickens the extremest pole than fountain-head,
So my dead self in numbness frozen and dark
Sudden with light and warmth was filled, a ray
From the far depths, a soul-transforming mark.
And Ilion's ancient walls, Sigaeum's bay
Present before me showed, nor less my ear
Rang to the mingled cries of hero-fray,—
The rage of pitiless strife, the sword, the spear,
The madness drunk with blood, the thought that yearned
To the far home, the calm resolve and near,

[1] Homer. [2] Shakespeare and Dante.

The axe that clove the gates, the fire that burned,
The gods in faction ranked, the fateful doom,
The pride to ruin, the song to wailing turned.
No pictured pageant these, in fancy's loom
Woven, but in present act my soul within
Living were marshalled o'er time's rifled tomb.
But he, that master bard, in whom begin
All notes of song, in whom th' undying strains
Not of man's earth their last fulfilment win
As ocean-born to ocean's breast the rain
In copious joy returns, my wonderment
Smiled to behold, as smile on gaping swains
Great palace lords in state; then downward bent
My kneeling form he touched; a world unknown
Oped at that touch, as opes a curtained tent.
There with the wave-tossed chief, whose island throne [1]
Shadows the Adrian wave, the heavy debt
Wandering I paid of Neptune's town [2] o'erthrown;
Aeaea's moonlit isle,[3] the ambush set
On the siren-haunted rocks, the palace floor
Stained with debauch, with vengeful slaughter wet,
Were mine to share, mine the long-hoarded store
Of absent love with envious hatred crossed,
Mine the sure rest attained, the ultimate shore.
Then as the starry knots of morning frost
Outlined on bark and leaf, as grows the day
Melt into what that beauty first embossed,
So with the forms it showed that lightning ray
Into my being passed, till sightless now
In the heart's self they made incorporate stay.
Fount of Pierian rills! all streams that flow
Are of thy fullness part; such power is thine
On thy elect thy selfhood to bestow.
"O ye who with full throat the draught divine
Have quaffed by Arno's banks or Avon's; ye

[1] Ithaca. [2] Troy. [3] Where Odysseus found Circe.

"Heirs of my sway, co-partners of my line,
Receive this least this last of suppliants; he,
Child of a later day, may kinship find
In strains by earlier years denied to me.
For as progressive suns each several kind
Of choicest fruit to ripeness bring, and each
With some new sweetness fraught of pulp or rind,
So years succeeding years in forward reach
Weave the bright strands of song in textured hue
Changing, as changed the thought, the life, the speech:
Yet in deep self the same, though seeming new
Songster and audience both, and bides the song
To its own note, to him that breathed it, true."
Such words from him who 'mid the minstrel throng
Towers as o'er lesser fanes the giant [fane]
Where thrones the Fisher-Prince earth's lords among,
With head bowed down I heard, till once again,
Touched by his hand, I upward looked, and saw
What fadeless traced abides in memory's grain:
Such sight as feared rebuke or tongueless awe
Might have forbid my verse, but his command
Utterance compels whose word is truth and law.
For now where erst distinct on either hand
That glorious twain I late beheld, the pride
This of the Ausonian, that of British land,
A twofold vision glowed; on either side
A lucid orb it seemed, a thought, a dream
Than solid earth more real, than heaven more wide:
An uncreated world poised in the beam
Of all creative light, eternity
Present in time, o'er time and space supreme.
The season-tempered earth, the clouds, the sky,
Forest and field, great town, strong citadel,
Populous mart, fair champaign, mountain high
Were pictured there, and all around them fell
As a thin veil o'er beauty cast, the haze

Of English summer noons, spell woven on spell.
But this and these beyond my trancéd gaze
Another orb beheld, unlike the first,
Substance or dream, night pierced with noonday rays;
There of all pain and shameful wrong the worst
To sense or spirit known, the abhorred descent
To the dark pit, of death th' abode accursed.
And the revisited stars, and evil shent[1]
By cleansing pains, while round the mystic height
In hopeful course the heavenward path is bent.
And those and these beyond, the mansions bright
With God's own manifest love, the universe,
Maker and made, one inter-radiant light,—
Terrible vision; yet by Love's self the verse
Inspired, by Love the tale that heaven and earth
With hell inweaves in one, bid to rehearse.
O all-embracing song, with golden girth
Clasping in one the whole, O high decree
From partial throes shaping the renovate birth!
All being, all lives greatest and least, in thee
Their ultimate goal attain, to unison brought
In conscient bliss, heaven's sought reality!
Then as intent I gazed, in eager thought
Searching the depths beyond, as a far land
O'er limitless steppes by the strayed traveller sought,
Till ridge on ridge, touched by dim evening's wand
Confused together fade, that vision dread
Passed, as effaced by touch of mightier hand.
Yet though unseen, remained, in heart and head
Graven, as in Argive[2] hearts the patriot song
That age by age to freedom's conquests led.
Then with reviving strength and effort strong
I broke the bonds of trance, as who from swoon
Wakes to fresh life his gathered friends among.

[1] Used apparently for *abolished*.
[2] Possibly should be *Spartan*, referring to Tyrtaeus.

And one was there who said, "The secret boon
On earth by Heaven conferred, the instrument
Tempering all discord to its own sweet tune,
From Lydia's shore to reed-girt Mantua sent,
Echoed in silvery notes, with mightier strains
In Arno's vale by the great Master blent;
Till most on Avon's banks and meadowed plains
To English accents tuned, the magic wove
Of infinite chords, but bound the golden chains
That knit earth's spleenful orb to Heaven's great Love."

CANTO III

Napoleon III and others in great place I have seen; but I was never received by any with such favour as by the two poets with whom I am now standing—Beatrice smiles on me, and Dante resolves some perplexities in regard to the *Commedia*.

HIM of his name the third, from frontiered Rhine
To Western seas who ruled, till dark Sedan
Closed o'er the sunset of Ajaccio's line,
And him th' incarnate Fate, by men the man
Of iron named and blood, whose master hand
Perfected last what Teuto's fight[1] began,
Have I beheld; and who fair Europe's land
Cleansed from Gaul's earlier swarm, where seared and riven
By th' iron hail thy oaks, green Ardennes, stand:—
And him, the thrice-crowned Head to whom is given
In God's own place to throne, the penal doom
To bind or loose, sole link of earth and heaven,
Present have I revered; Eternal Rome,
What power is like to thine? what palaced pride
Can match the Martyr's shrine, the Fisher's tomb?
—All these have I beheld, and more beside,
Heroes of earth or lords; nor converse due
With such, nor greeting hands, has fate denied.

[1] Arminius defeated Varus, B.C. 9, in the Teutoberg wood.

But ne'er in access bland or reverent view
Have I such favour found as when that hour
Midmost I stood between th' immortal two ;
One in their kinship made ; so willed the power,
Lord of my spirit's birth, with subtle skill
Tending to ripened fruit th' entrusted flower.
No vain Pieria this, no fabled hill
Of yore Parnassus named,—voiceless and lone
Those heights, and dry the Heliconian rill,—
But the true founts of song, the secret known
To the hid gods of earth ; the magic pale
Closed to all else, allowed to these alone.
As who by power divine from pain and bale
Secure of old in hottest furnace stood,
Girt with the tyrant fires of Dura's vale,
So 'mid that splendour I ; the mystic flood
In brightness whelmed my sense, nor thought nor word
Was mine to frame, childlike by awe subdued.
Till as from distance borne a voice I heard,
But whose I knew not yet, that like swift flame
Kindling to new delight my spirit stirred.
And, "What thy inmost wish, secure of blame
Or dull reproof, declare, that question made
Meetly, to meet reply may give proclaim."
As one by inward force constrained, afraid,
Yet in consentment glad, so wrought the sound
On my charmed sense, I the command obeyed.
But first my dazzled eyes that long the ground
Had sought, to upward gaze unapt, I raised
As to his master's face the wistful hound.
There in full view with equal splendour blazed
The suns of earth's true heaven, the glorious twain
All heights above, fittest by silence praised.
And both my gaze returned, nor by disdain
Was dimmed the brightness of that smile that shone

In the clear eyes, love's, beauty's, life's, domain.
But most in his through whom the memoried stone [1]
By flower-crowned Mary's dome [2] is honoured more
Than Memnon's shrine, or Caesar's laurelled throne.
Serious his look, and sad the garb he wore
With exile dust besoiled; but of strange flowers
A triple crown inwove his forehead bore.
For some with crimson glow the fiery towers
Of Pluto called to mind, and some the green
Of the upward mount, some, gold from Eden bowers.
At his right hand who seemed of Heaven the Queen [3]
In perfect beauty shone; nor turned aside
His look from hers, nor hers from his was seen.
Lord of the Song Divine, Etruria's pride,
O Dante, thine the form, and hers with thine
By love eterne conjoined and deified.
Low at the knees of him whose mighty line
Writ the whole heart of love, prostrate I bowed
As bows the pilgrim at th' all-worshipped shrine.

Dante gives me encouraging words, and recognizes me as his follower.

"But rare all precious things, and scant the band
Attent to heaven's responsive notes, and few
The voice who mark, or hearing, understand.
Yet, as from distance struck, confusedly true
Echo repeats the sounds to listening ears
Which grant of melody's maze the guiding clue,
So the wide waste across of sundering years
The meaning of my song, the ninefold chain

[1] Sasso di Dante.
[2] S. Maria del Fiore, the Duomo of Florence.
[3] *a Queen* appears as an alternative reading in the MS. As Beatrice, not the B.V.M., is intended, *a* for *the* is probably correct.

"Reached from all deeps to the empyrean spheres.
But thou whose feet this intermediate plain
'Twixt world and world, have trod, no more afar
May'st note by note drink in the perfect strain."
Thus while he spoke, as on the Eastern bar
In molten silver quivering through dark air,
Outleaps the brightness of morn's herald star,
From her whose crescent[1] smile from stair to stair
Of heaven led up the ascent, a glance there shone
Such as in love's best page recorded are.
O smile all smiles above, O beauty shown
But to th' elect of heaven, O gentle light,
Pure emanation of the sapphire throne,
Can tongue avail to tell, can pen to write,
What I beheld in thee? when first thy ray
For dimness splendour gave, for blindness sight.
As who 'mid stranger tongues his toilsome way
Seeks to beguile with speech, but to his thought
Finds not the words that others hearken may,
So now the vision, that seen, such wonders wrought
Of renovate heart and life, my faltering song
Halts to declare, that music's notes untaught.
Then he, the patriot bard, whom faction's wrong
Gave to an exile's tomb, where Adria's wave
Floods the sad marsh Ravenna's walls along,
Once more his word resumed; "To thoughts that crave
Reply, be answer given; the hidden seed
Shall in the manifest flower its fullness have.
Nor unresponsive thou, nor slow to read
The cyphered signs of truth, nor now to learn,
Heaven-taught of yore, the things of heaven hast need.
But this thy doubt remains, my spirit's urn
What fountain filled with living draught, what brand
Lit in my verse the fires that quenchless burn:
And if by earthly airs with me was fanned

[1] Always increasing in sweetness.

"She of my verse the soul, or if her name
Be but a mask of other purport planned.
Know then of earthly mould that peerless dame
Whom Love assigned my queen, in breathing form
Our native town, our earth, our sky the same
With fleshly vesture clad, with life-blood warm,
Though more than mortal fair; such perfect grace
Was hers, each word, each smile, each gest, each glance.
Yet not that gentle port, that angel face,
Wrought on my life the spell; a mightier chain
Than earthly love might forge was here in place.
For know whome'er the fateful Powers ordain
Poet or seer, to such is given for guide
A visible type of Love's all-quickening reign.
Else might the sense divine for man too wide
Formless remain, and vague, and random all
The marksman's keenest shaft, fit aim denied.
Thus in the mirror aptly placed, though small,
Is seen the giant sun, and gathered shine
Dazzling the rays that else unheeded fall.
So was all human worth, all truth divine,
Mirrored in her to me, herself my theme,
Centre and brightness of the encircling line.
In her fulfilled Love's utmost law, the dream
Bodied in wakeful truth, herself the glass
Transfused with brightness of th' eternal beam.
Nor other now heaven's law; the thing that was
Is and shall be, till every type receive
Fullness, and mortal to immortal pass.
But thou fulfil thy task assigned, nor grieve
By seeming change perplexed or true love's wrong,
And what thou mourn'st, delayed, not lost, believe."
Thus while he spoke, my brother guide, who long,
As who sweet music hears, and waits, intent
Lest sound or sign jar on the chords of song,

On me such aspect turned, as pity, blent
With love's approval, wreathes, that the quick blood
Up to my face from my full heart was sent;
And as by lightning flash I understood
Signed in that life my own, as fits the glove
Drawn on the wearer's hand, and through the wood
Rang out the triumph chaunt of conquering Love.

CANTO IV

Invocation to the poet's unnamed and mystic Beatrice—Shakespeare, with Ideal Beauty by his side, appear : he is silent : I do him reverence—By a clear stream I now see Musaeus, and with him a crowd of true poets of all ages.

O ONCE and ever loved, to whom the flower
  Of my closed heart in life's first morning smit
Oped to the fullness of thy quickening power,
In roseate hues of joy and fragrance, fit
  For thee whose gifts were these, till failed withdrawn
From the dull earth the vision shaming it;
If in this verse thy name, that to my dawn
  Was the bright morning star, as hers proclaimed
By angel songs on Eden's mystic lawn,
Unspoken bide, my silence, haply blamed
  By some, with thee shall pardon find, for thou
Not in their world but thine art rightly named.
'Neath their own ashes laid more hotly glow
  Love's altar fires, but to the common ray
Made bare, like coals dispersed their heat forgo :
Not so, not so, thy praise; thy presence aye
  Nameless shall names outlive, even in this song
Made one with love, as starlight merged in day.

And now the voice that Arno's vale along
Love first attuned, had ceased, and distant heard
Breathed a new chaunt the forest trees among.
Nor nearer drew the sound, but as a bird
Flutters a ruffled wing, then stays, the trees
Quivering to the far sound responsive stirred.
As one who feels a presence near, yet sees
Nothing, though strained his gaze, while vague belief
Peoples the void with fancied images,
So 'mid that forest I; each branch, each leaf,
Seemed conscious of the unseen, till even what fear
Might there suggest, revealed, had brought relief.
Then was I ware of him on earth whose peer
Has been not nor shall be, o'er all supreme,
Polestar and zenith of the human sphere.
But as the faint presentment of a dream
Was that divinest form, and dim the face
Scarce seen as though by moonlight's doubtful gleam.
And close beside, but yet more faint in place,
A pure perfection stood, a beauty veiled
In its own light, that none the form might trace,—
Two wonders blent in one; my spirit quailed
As on the twain I gazed, and sense and mind
Dazzled and weak from that great vision failed.
Then spoke my guide, "Whate'er of greatness joined
To beauty and perfect life, whate'er the power
That fashioned man has to men's world assigned,
All precious things of earth, heaven's bridal dower,
Mirrored in Shakespeare dwell, in him the spring
Of the great deep, in him Love's inmost bower.
His the waked songs of morning, his the wings
That beat heaven's answering gale, in him alone
Centred all highest aims, all noblest things."
Then as before some monarch's sovereign throne
The herald guides some stranger's step, from far
In reverence come that worshipped power to own;

So by my master led, my guide, my star,
Teacher and Lord, in lowliest guise I bowed
To him the polestar of man's ultimate bar.
But he, as through dull veil of envious cloud
On earth's expectant face the glorious Sun
Cheerly looks forth in his bright self avowed,
So where I lowly knelt that kingly one
Deigned to look down in grace; a smile, a look
Perfecting all by the elder twain begun.
As to keen student eyes a well-writ book
Open its tale declares, so nature's whole
In that one smile clear form and meaning took.
Till to that vision's self transformed, my soul
Other than first I knew, to these subdued,
Earth's glory, nature's crown, art's ultimate goal.
Such close the vision found; and if too rude
My verse, and halt the line, marvels to show
Wider a range than earth's, and higher mood,
Be in themselves th' excuse; too deep the flow
For line or lead, the mountain peaks too high
For aim, too slight the shaft, too weak the bow.
"But ne'er," so rang the voice, "shall mortal eye,
As yet by death unsealed, the godlike three
Again behold in veil-less majesty.
But thou who them hast seen, go forth; to thee
The secret told retain; to every maze
The clue thou hold'st, to every door the key."
Such words I heard, but knew not whence; amaze
Held me enthralled awhile; till to my thought
Answered the star-crowned guardian of my ways,
And said, "Thus far by thy hid birthright brought
Hast thou the lords beheld, by Will divine
Monarchs and makers of the world of thought.
Now forward lies thy way where gathered shine,
Lesser though bright, in the quired firmament,
The associate splendours of the starry Nine.

"But first thy mortal sight bedazed and shent
By sight's excess, by friendly power restored
Must what remains in its true guise present."
Thus spoke the brother-guide, and to the word
Shaping the deed, a narrow pathway took
Towards a glad sound of many waters heard;
Till by a green descent and cool a brook
Sparkled our eyes before, and at the edge
Stood one of vestment white and reverend look.
Still as the watchful bird on bush or hedge
Slant o'er the stream, he stood; with asphodel
Circled his hair entwined with greenest sedge.
Then spoke my guide, "Of whom old glories tell,
Musaeus[1] here thou seest; apt guardian he
O'er the pure stream fed by Castalia's well.
All other sons of song, the Imperial Three
Whom late thou saw'st alone except, his state
Willing attend, and grace his sovereignty."
This said, to that grey form of dateless date
My steps he led, where by the guarded wave
Th' expectant shades his sign permissive wait.
Nor long that sign delayed; with aspect grave
Yet glad the welcome given, as might beseem
His son[2] whose charm unsealed the pitiless grave.
Not with more zest the wain's o'erlaboured team
Haste to the cooling ford than I, to slake
My thirst of sight, stooped to the healing stream.
From a far world derived those waters take
Virtue, by him bestowed from whom the spheres
In circling course their ninefold music make.
Then sudden as th' uncurtained stage appears
With moving shapes alive, the sight that fill
With the feigned pageant of imagined years,

[1] A mythical poet, to whom a similar place is given in the *Sixth Aeneid.*

[2] Musaeus in one legend is son to Orpheus.

So where till then green valley, copse-grown hill,
Had silent seemed and void, my wondering eye
Such vision saw that the remembrance still
Quickens my pulse with joy: an hour that I
Treasure a gift for aye, till once again
Converse be mine with that bright company.
All whom the Muse from out the sons of men
Has chosen and marked her own, whom deathless song
Themselves has deathless made, were there in ken.
From the young years when erst to mortal tongue
Was measured utterance given, to latest time
Of earth, sere bays, clipped speech, and notes unstrung,
Present were gathered there; from the blue clime
Of famed Ionia's crest, to where the tide
On Thule's shores lay tranced to Runic rhyme;—
Th' Athenian stage, Elea's victor pride,[1]
Thy bards, imperial Rome, the shepherd lay
Of fair Trinacria's hills,[2] I there descried.
Nor less, though offspring of a feebler day,
Italia's lyric bard, or who the tale
Of knightly deeds inwove with fiend or fay.[3]
There too the seraph bard of Eden's vale
Somewhat apart I saw; upraised his eyes,
Not sightless now, to heaven, and forehead pale.
Then spoke that white-robed seer, "In other skies
Throned the impersonate Power, from whom proceed
To man, thought, music, life, love, everything,
Here in these bowers from earth remote the meed
Has placed of passionate song, till pure the flame
Mount to its source, for harvest ripe the seed.
And some their lays attest; and some to fame
Known, but unknown their uttered verse; and some,

[1] Pindar. [2] The Sicilian Idyllists.
[3] Petrarch, perhaps; Ariosto, Tasso, and others.

"Fresh-graved the song, effaced the songster's name,—
But all eternal found: till closed the sum
Of fadeless bays in perfect chaplets wove,
Crowning the lord of song; to him they come
A bridal quire, where music weds with Love."

CANTO V

England in Shakespeare has the greatest of all poets—His successors flit by : Pope, Byron, Shelley, Keats—Their future suggested—I now hear myself named by my Mother ; S. T. Coleridge appears, and in return for my early admiration, fostered by her, tells me the secret of the vale of poets ; their nobleness, their joy, grief, and final perfected state.

Empress and nurse of nations, of my birth
Cradle, even mine, what name, what greatness, say
Can match with thine ? what likeness thine on earth ?
Since of the noblest three our being's day
Has given o'er minds to rule, the noblest one
Is thine, the mightiest power, the keenest ray.
England, this glory thine ; the circling sun
That sets not on thy bounds, even there has seen
Or man or god greater than Shakespeare none.
Yet not alone in him thy laurels green
Ever abide ; his court a sequent band
Ever attend, as stars in heaven's serene.
Nor these were absent now ; at his command,
A warbling flight, they came, whoe'er by song
Tuned to high thought have gladdened English land.
And some I knew for smoothest line, yet strong,
Rightly renowned, to whom the well-earned bays
Of noblest thought in balanced verse belong :

But chiefly he whose guarded grot surveys
The royal stream where midway bends his flow
From Windsor's bowers to London's chartered maze;
And following these, but varied more, in show
Of brightness robed or shade, in mood and brain
Kin yet diverse, thy late-born minstrels go.
But foremost he [1] who Othman's despot chain
From renovate Greece, with trumpet call that woke
Dull Europe, strove t' unbind, nor strove in vain;
Who first the sword unsheathed, who first the yoke
Smote till it burst, till Missalonghi claimed
The passionate life outworn, the heart that broke.
O hero bard in times degenerate famed
Sole undegenerate thou, like him of yore
Of a saved Greece the true Tyrtaeus [2] named!
Close by his side an angel form, yet more
Than fancied angels fair, whom bigot hate
Drove from the British to the Ausonian shore,
Poet of light and life; too soon the date
To thy sea-spousals given; by swift decree
With Lycidas and Hylas linked thy fate.
Nor absent thou from that fair company,
Love-smit Seléné's [3] bard, for the harsh earth
Too sweet thy song's interfluous melody.
And others next I saw, by kindred birth
Sharers with these in fame, that kindled here,
To earth's dim memories brightness gives and worth,
Till the great winter of the secular year
In frozen silence reign, and withered man
From the dead branch drop off a leaflet sere.
Not thus the world beyond, the eternal plain
Where bide the ethereal lamps, eclipsed below

[1] Byron.

[2] The Athenian poet who encouraged the Spartans in the second Messenian war.

[3] Refers to the *Endymion* of Keats.

Till perfect made in heaven what earth began.
But the green meads where living waters flow
Their sure abode are given, and else whate'er
On those they love the worshipped gods bestow,
Are theirs to the end of time; such harvest bear
The seeds of god-given song: with its high merit
In just appraisement weighed, may nought compare.
This portion none receives but he whose spirit
Kindled with other flame, than earth's, and made
One with that flame, may its pure source inherit.
From the cool shadows of a willowy glade
Somewhat apart, where curved the gliding stream,
Were to my listening ear these words conveyed:
And from beneath the boughs such steady gleam
As yields the glow-worm's spark, but this more bright
Of sapphire hue sent forth a lovely beam.
As who 'mid summer lawns some new delight
Of flower or crimson fruit beholding, stays
His onward step, till satiate made his sight,
So on that star-like spark I fixed my gaze,
While, as responsive thought to thought, more clear
Full on me turned shone forth those gem-like rays;
Till, sense with sense accordant now, my ear
Took in the uttered name, that gently spoken
By one from childhood's days, had power to cheer.
Hers was the voice, the word; nor other token
Of her was needed there; the love I knew
By the great chasm 'twixt world and world unbroken.
For loves to loves succeed, and old to new
Yields as a wave-chased wave, but this may change not
More than by cloud-rack heaven's enduring blue.
A mother's love that heaven; its courses range not,
To their first tracement true; its circling hold
Absence and care and death itself estrange not.
I knew the present power, the charms of old

Around me wove their spell, till where I stood
Back to its source my being's stream was rolled.
There on the marge of that clear-watered wood
His form I saw, whose phantom-haunted lay [1]
Told the just vengeance of ill-squandered blood.
Calm was his face, the slips of silvery grey
Shadowed a youthful smile, from his clear eyes
Shone the calm brightness of an Autumn day.
"The love that to my verse in childish wise,"
Thus were his words; "was thine; the spirit's dawn,
Unveiled by her whose influence now supplies
Unseen the good thou seest, my form has drawn
From the calm rest of satiate thought to teach
What the hid virtue of this secret lawn.
This by thy inmost thought, thought mute to speech,
Questioned I know; but all too dull thy ken
The truth to see, too short thy grasp to reach.
With joys exceeding those to dying men
By niggard earth allowed, thou seest around
Filled all the vale, flower-crowned each denizen;
Yet in thy ears such notes of plaintive sound
As tell of inward grief, like wormwood poured
In sweetest draught, the perfect joy confound.

Why, you ask, is not their lot perfect?

Know then whate'er its natural element
Outgoes, to higher life sublimed and signed,
Measures its pain even by its joy's extent.
For not unscathed beyond its natural kind
May life its orb dilate, nor free from smart
Mingles the mortal with th' immortal mind.

Life gives many examples of this alloy of good by evil

Nor 'mid the world of dreams whose marge is death

[1] Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*.

"Idly by men called life, is given to weave
From thorn or canker free the Poet's wreath.
And who from the high gods the most receive
Must most in count repay; and oft the morn
In brightness risen declines to cloud-stained eve.
And some with fairest hues of verse the thorn
Of personal hate have dressed, and to the strings
Of love's sweet lyre have tuned the notes of scorn.
And some, nor few their tale, ethereal wings
Have limed with purchased clay, and their high dower,
Ill barterers they, exchanged for earthly things.
And some with hasty hands the delicate flower
Of love have rudely grasped, till reft of grace
In blameful ruin lies love's sheltering bower.
And some, the noblest these, though nought of base
Has marred their work divine, yet seeing mourn
Earth's limitless wrong, life's error, love's disgrace,
And conquered good by conquering ill o'erborne,
And love by hate, and life by death; and joy
Prelude to pain, and hope of hope forlorn—
Desolate all, and the fair world a toy[1]
Tossed in a demon's play, and sovereign fate
Powerless to save, all-powerful to destroy.
So memory love's bright rays with gloom of hate
Darkens awhile, till by alternate change
The perfect mind attains its destined state.
Such law contains us here; nor think it strange
If joy with grief combine; th' Elysian grove
The portal this, no more; the outward range
Of the hid rest where life is one with Love."

[1] *Ἄνθρωπος . . . θεοῦ τι παίγνιον*: Plato, *Laws*, Book VII.

CANTO VI

Passing into another landscape, I at first see no one—My guide explains that here are the Historians, themselves little known personally in their own time—They then appear; Herodotus, Thucydides, Livy, Tacitus—Then a motley crowd of divers races: Gibbon among them eminent.

To the vexed thought erewhile that anxious held
My mind, the poet-sage such answer meet
Portioned, till loosed each knot, each doubt dispelled.
Nor longer stayed discourse, his work complete
At her behest, who to Pieria's rill,
Truest of guides, first led my childish feet.
Silent my guide and I the sacred hill
Circled with reverent step, till reached the bound
Where those great spirits their lustral doom fulfil.
Before us now with matted turf the ground
Rose in ascending slope, and up the steep
In curve alternate traced the footpath wound.

It was a weary ascent;

Till on the mountain head where rock nor tree
Parted the view we stood; beneath the land
Showed as the ridges of a wind-blown sea:
Part seen but more concealed, with frequent band

Of interposing mist, a shifting shroud
By air and light woven in illusive strand.
But overhead nor vaporous mist nor cloud
Stained the pure heavens, and dark the central blue
A silent vault to the pale margin bowed.

We reach the summit, but see no sign of life anywhere.

Then thus my guide; "Whom thou desir'st to see,
Lords of the mount our steps have climbed, more near
Are than thou think'st, though hidden yet from thee.
Little on earth beheld or marked, even here
Not oft revealed to sight, their honoured meeds
Not in themselves but what they wrought appear.
For these in history's pictured scroll the deeds
Of gods made act in men, the bright ones hid
By their own light have clothed in mortal weeds.
These the dulled seeds of fire, awhile forbid
By cold earth's numbing frost, th' o'ercrusted death
Uplift, as spring flowers burst the coffin lid.
Fostered by these to renovate life and breath
The nations wake from sleep, till the great past
From its own memories winds the present wreath.
But they the flame who fanned, the summoning blast
Who blew, themselves unmarked the most remain,
Lost in the shade by their own trophies cast."
Then I beheld as when the autumn plain
Darkens to night, and from the fallow ground
Turning, the peasant plods his cot to gain,
From blackening heaps of weeds with care around
Piled o'er the exhausted furrows, one by one
Comes out in ruddy light each smouldering mound,—
So on that height where form or likeness none
Late I perceived, a crowned and sceptred throng
Like, yet distinct, in kingly lustre shone.

Their kingship always abides; their judgments stand.

And now my view before in order set
Ranged the great lords of sceptred history,
Senate of Time, on Time's high mountain set.

As the loftiest tree in a forest, or summit in a mountain range,

Four giant ones stood forth in central show.
And foremost one who eldest seemed, arrayed
In Dorian garb of massive fold, his head
Circled a ninefold wreath of myrtle braid.
But o'er those aged limbs and brows were shed
Gleams of immortal youth, in Cambrian dell
Like some old oak with magic flowers o'erspread.
And next in soldier guise attired, that well
Beseemed his stern aspect, th' Athenian chief
Held forth to view a blood-stained chronicle
Of ill-assorted power, and splendour brief;
Bright dawn of storm-vexed day,—the Maenad[1] blas
To blighted Hellas floweret left nor leaf.
Sociate with these, but third in order, past
Who honoured lived and long where Padua's towers
O'er the great plain their storied shadows cast:
Till to the she-wolf's brood whate'er the hours
Had brought of weal or bale, from Sylvia's son[2]
To Caesar's line, their heirloom bides and ours.
Last of the four, yet 'mid that band to none
Second in grave aspect, a shape with night
Clothed, as it seemed, and storm, came slowly on.
With blood and shame besmirched the scroll his right
Grasping in part concealed, with Roman crime
By Rome on Rome avenged the page was dight.
And these beyond whose spell in prose, or rhyme
Kindred to prose, to imaged steadfastness

[1] Fury. [2] Romulus.

Have charmed the restless waves of onward time:
A motley throng they came, in form and dress
Of Goth or Celt or Slav or Teuto's race:
Various as when by tides compelled or stress
Of long opposing winds, some harbour's face
With myriad flags confused appears, in hue
Diverse and form, compelled from every place.
And eminent these amidst [in] nearer view
Him who the gathering shades of ancient Rome
From morn till midnight gloom pourtrayed I knew.
As matchless reared the Tuscan artist's[1] dome
All lesser piles by Tiber's banks upreared
Dwarfs in compare, its founder's pride and tomb;
So 'mid the throng of lesser days appeared
He who that task fulfilled, where Leman's lake
Mirrored the rest by lifelong toil endeared.
For as deep waters just reflection make
Of converse skies and bordering heights, that ever
Pourtrayal apt on the calm surface take,
While all distort in restless whirl and quiver
Colour and form and light confusedly blent
Are dashed and lost adown the restless river;
So to their gaze alone whose calm content
Is fixed on the wider orb, our little day
Views a mere point in time's wide firmament,—
Is given in changeless truth and apt array
Earth's fleeting shapes, like leaves by whirlwind blast
When Autumn rides the tempest, to pourtray.
So by the elder four, by this the last
But worthiest, wrought in hardest ore the throne
For the Colossus of the Imperial past.
The golden head, the silver breast, the zone
Brazen, the feet with clay debased, a mass
Shapeless in common dust have passed o'erthrown.
And but the likeness drawn on history's glass,

[1] Michel Angelo, architect of the dome of S. Peter's.

That bides when gone the substance, nought were left
In aught that is to know the all that was.
Of lesser things and feebler stuff the weft
Is woven of later days, a trivial show,
Of honour, strength, grace, loveliness bereft.
With Athens, Sparta, passed the morn; the glow
Of noon with Rome declined, the clouds of night
Now o'er monotonous plains their shadows throw.

Yet a light from Love on high shines on them.

CANTO VII

We descend the mount and rest in a bower—Explanation why so few great historians have existed, especially in later times—I see Plutarch, who leads us through a mystic region where strange music is heard.

Even here time existed for me, and too short was that permitted, yet there was much to learn which I cannot reveal.

As on far wandering bound at fall of night
Who leaves his birth-place home, and knows the morn
Shall find him far from each loved sound or sight,
Slow with such strain as self from self were torn
He leaves the darkened porch; a lonely road
Stretches before to distant lands forlorn.
Such was my thought as silent both we trod
The winding curves, the long descent that led
To the green margin of the level sod.
And still with many thoughts oppressed my head
Downward I held, the while my careful guide
Through the dense copse my sightless footsteps led.
Till gently from the common path aside
Turning, his hand on mine he placed, and drew
Towards a recess that in the forest side

Showed as a cave, so thick the branches grew
Around and overhead, nor noontide beam
Pierced to the grass wet with perennial dew,
But violet-sprinkled turf betwixt, a stream
Clearer than diamond flowed ; no sound was there
But through far boughs the blue jay's sudden scream.
In such, no other glade, Elissa[1] fair
By Priam's vagrant son was seen, alas,
When sight was one with love, love with despair.
Then where in music fell the liquid glass
Poured on a rocky shelf, awhile to rest
We leant, 'mid purple flowers and thymy grass.
But I of mysteries hid the former quest
Resumed in silent thought, till urged by him
The doubt foreknown my questioning words expressed.
Then he ; "Of earthly sense the twilight dim
Yet hangs thy view before, as lost in haze
Uncertain forms perplex the horizon rim.
The mighty record of earth's nobler days
Hast thou revered in these, the immortal band
Who link with Rome and Hellas England's praise.
Yet bides thy thought perplexed, the builder's wand
Why given to only these ? fulfilled the feat
By these alone, by others idly planned ?
Mark then, to each design in act complete
With cunning hand conjoined and steadfast will
Must in fit purpose apt material meet.
Nor wanting these can nature's self fulfil
Whate'er the task designed, nor human wit
Of these deprived attainment wed with skill.
And still to noblest form must substance fit
In apt accord combine, with golden pen
On golden base should golden deeds be writ.

[1] Dido.

The truly great historians are on the mount, and their records are eternal. The world has since degenerated, and History with it.

" But ere their memory passed, the abiding Power
Whom at these gates thou sawest, lest envious Time
Fabled yet true should his own birth devour,
From those who history's mount with toil to climb
Have striven, her favourites chose in mindful charge,
Co-heirs and guardians of her memoried prime.
These in her shrine she thrones ; the rest at large
On lesser hearts intent and emperies
Ephemeral, hold the mount's uncertain marge,
Save him [1] who from contempt of old surmise
Redeemed Boeotia's name, of hero-worth
Chronicler true, with life's best wisdom wise.
Sad Chaeronea's boast, th' ancestral earth
Her treasurer finds in thee ! through thee to teach
All the slow years recount of nobler birth."

He welcomes us : my guide replies : Plutarch leads us on.

He spoke, and turning led where close the bough
O'erarching passage gave, nor might the way
Passage to uncompanioned step allow,
So thick the sidelong fence, nor glimpse of day
Divide the vaulting green ; and all beneath
Year strewn on year the withered leafage lay.
Here death with life alternate, life with death,
Join in fraternal rule, and, green or sere,
Summer with winter weaves a chequered wreath.
As who mis-strayed at even in lonely fear
Wanders by unknown paths where landmark none
Nor watch-dog's bark, nor sound of human cheer,

[1] Plutarch.

And thinks, Alone till night's long course be run
Here must I stay; then with fantastic dread
Shudders, if ne'er arise on earth the sun;
Such thoughts or like were mine, as slow my tread
Followed our self-given guide, whose awful shade
Unseen yet felt, silent our pathway led.
And as in opiate sleep the act essayed
Void of effect remains, so frustrate seemed
Our task, endless the toil, unreal the glade.
And if in truth we journeyed there or dreamed
I knew not then, nor cared, in drowsy trance
Of a strange spell the captive unredeemed.
Then a far sound of silver resonance
Pulsed on the heavy air, not such as tells
Haply of soldier pomp or circling dance,
But the faint tone that from high minster bells
Dies with the dying day, or midnight chaunt
Borne on the organ-wave from hermit cells:
Nor earthly music that, nor borrowed vaunt
Of heavenly spheres supreme, an echo strange
Of the unreal world that dreams and shadows haunt.
Yet as 'mid elfin notes with sudden change
Rings out the hunter's horn, so these among
Was other music heard of measured range,
As of the ever-moving orbs, a song
Sung with the harpers of th' Elysian grove;
An undertone scarce marked, scarce felt, yet strong
Drawn to the centre of abysmal Love.

CANTO VIII

We enter a mountain-girdled plain, covered with flowers unknown on earth—These are the illusions of Philosophy—In a central temple she is seen as a mighty female figure: her votaries stream forth and circle endlessly round—Here are Socrates, Solomon, Plato, Aristotle, Pythagoras, Epicurus, and others—The goddess specially favours Lucretius—Presently the whole fades in mist.

ROUSED by that music's twofold chord, my eyes
From the dark path I lifted, wonders new
Beholding, and fresh realms 'neath other skies.
Passed were the forest bounds, and dazzling blue
Over us rose the sky, but circling far
Wall-like a mountain line enclosed the view.
So round the plain that most Sarmatian [1] war
Has wronged and yet may wrong, the Balkan heights
Rear a black rampart to the midnight star.
But here the guarded plain with spring's delights
Glowed, as of Persian looms the web, or burn
With many coloured fires the Northern nights.
But nor in herb nor flower could I discern
Aught of our customed earth's; nor glowing rose
Nor lily wan, nor moss, nor downy fern.
For as through flickering veil mis-shaped when glows

[1] Russian invasions.

O'er Tadmor's sands the day, strange forms of men
Or beasts, or crested towers, or palmy rows
Now fixed, now gliding, daze the traveller's ken;
So was the portent rare, to things of earth
Like yet unlike, mocking the where and when.
"O guardian sole and guide, lord of my birth,"
Such was my cry, "what mockery this? for whom
Prepared, or real the scene, or jesting mirth?"
Then he, "No jestful semblance this; the doom,
Matched with its earthly foil, whate'er the task
Done or undone, apportions light or gloom.
This the true substance, that the semblant mask,
But each to each reflex; the harvest grain
The garner fills, the vintaged grape the cask.
So they whose numbered days in labour vain
Have risen and set, though high th' intent, by fate
Hither dismissed, concordant meed obtain.
They who in fond research, and vain debate
Of cause, effect, and end, philosophy
Named, but illusion all, early and late
Have toiled nor aught attained, by fantasy
Beguiled of noblest aim, as who should take
For substance real the sunset pageantry.
But these as sad Arachne's daughters make
Of their own selves a centred maze, a frame
Of wisdom void, though wrought for wisdom's sake."
Thus while he spoke as pours on festal days
From some cathedral porch the city crowd,
One, but disparted soon by several ways,
So from a columned porch of aspect proud
Reared in 'mid field, a sober-vested throng
Streamed, as o'er Autumn skies a rising cloud.
And some with upturned face their ranks among
In joyful memory went, and some with mien
Downcast, as victims bowed to tyrant wrong;
And some with measured tread and brow serene

In banded sequence moved; and some pursued
Singly their way, th' ungreeted crowd between.
But all, whate'er their guise of seeming mood,
By circling tracks were led, the trodden ground
Retreading still, with endless toil renewed.
Saddened I gazed, nor for my gazing found
Purpose or rest, as in mid stream the eye
Wearies to watch the eddy's ceaseless round.
Till, for a while unseen, a temple high
Midmost the plain I marked; a Doric row
Of columned marble 'gainst the purple sky.
Almost a blank it seemed, the secular snow
That crowns Helvetia's peaks, of mark or stain
Does not more void, more spectral-phantom, show.
There from the crowd withdrawn, as whom disdain
Part, and in part deep thought, or weariness
Yet unresolved from things around detain,
A mighty form I saw; a woman's dress
Enwrapped the giant limbs; her laurelled brow
Leaned on her upturned hand its heavy stress.
Now her veiled eyes on earth she fixed, and now
Raised to the temple vault, where open space
Might to Heaven's utmost heights free pass allow.
And as white sails a fitful radiance trace
To shepherd eyes, where from far ocean flashed
They watch the gleam, so changeful shone her face;
Triumphant now, now with sad front abashed
She viewed the circling crowd, where oft in strife
Imaged or real, the currents crossed or clashed,
Bearing opposed and thwart the flags of life
Sombre or gay, as with the mystic lore
Of Asia scrolled or Attic wisdom rife.
There whom the Delphian voice in days of yore
Wisest of men proclaimed, and Salem's vaunt,
Th' uxorious king, in wealth and knowledge more;
†And whom Athéné's shrine and wisdom's haunt

Of dense assembly named, a teacher knew
Nor flattering guile could win, nor treachery daunt.†
And next, divinest of the godlike few
Worthy that path to tread, the garden lord
Of Academe, nursed on Hymettian dew.
To him the golden key, the magic word
That through all spheres to the spirit's utmost goal
Pierces, was given, the lustral pain's reward.
Thine the hid fount, O Plato! thine the bowl
Reversing Circe's draughts: released by thee,
Nor passion's charm can bind, nor death control.
Thou too, the master mind,[1] eternity
Thy name in wisdom's page, wast there, a star
Mirrored on endless waves of Time's wide sea.
Nor through th' unshaken heavens while day's bright car
Measures its Zodiac course, shall earth again
Relume the lamps in buried Greece that are.
And other lights were there, nor all in vain,
Though pale, their splendour shone, to distant years
Beacons or wildfires of a starless main.
The Samian[2] first, by old Crotona's peers
Revered a present god, such notes divine
His music touched to right attunéd ears,
To grosser sense denied; a fruitful vine
O'erbranching half a world; his word a gate
Through the spoiled tomb to life's all-gathering shrine.
Nor absent hence the peerless twain of date
Coeval though opposed; twin monarchs they
Over one realm in lordship separate.
He[3] who to pleasure gave the transient day
Portioned to dying men, and he[4] who led
Through toil endured and pleasure spurned the way,
And who[5] to Fate's constraint and order bred

[1] Aristotle. [2] Pythagoras. [3] Epicurus.
[4] Apparently Diogenes. [5] Zeno of Citium.

Of changeless law the ever-changing show
Of earth assigns, a headship without head ;
And who in heaven above or earth below
Nor headship own nor head, and purposed frame
To hap confused and sightless strife forgo.
Blind and of blind the guides, a hollow name
Pillared on seeming lore, and groundward bent
On partial shapes, let go the common aim.
From these averse her view she turns, intent
On the maze-tangled clue 'mid weed and stone
Now seen, now hid, through the far labyrinth sent,
†From gate to central shrine to those alone
Favoured by her, through all the spheres who led
Her bard, the bard of love, that secret known : †
For hers the purer ray, the firmer tread,
Where lags the reasoning mind, and faint and chill
Glimmers the light by other cressets shed :
The substance real of unreal things, that still
By earth on earthly lives are clad, the truth
By visible form belied, th' eternal Will,
Being and form and life in lasting sooth ;
Trinal the name, the essence one ; the goal
Eternal life stayed in eternal youth.
As in clear letters writ some storied scroll
To him who reads unfolds its lore, to me
From part to part lay bare the animate Whole,
And 'mid those moving forms whose pageantry
Figured the questioning mind, the prize attained
By some, by others missed, was given to see.
Then while I looked, as clouds with sunset stained
Crimson and gold, at night's approaching gloom
Of light and joy despoil themselves,—so seemed
Each noblest form and best,—Athens and Rome
With the elder East and late illumined West,
Showed as faint outlines on a sculptured tomb.
While from far depths with gathering sound increased

Was heard the twofold strain, the undertone,
As 'mid high choral chaunts the murmuring priest.
And at the sound the visioned forms each one
With her their worshipped Queen, and dome and plain,
In a bright mist were wrapped around and gone.
Nor of the world-long dream might aught remain
Or verse, or history's page, or system wove
Through subtlest web, though fair, nor shadow stain
The colourless radiance of infolding Love.

CANTO IX

A new, brilliant, and gay landscape appears: a myrtle-crowned procession approaches—These are writers of Romance, from the *Hundred Tales* of Tuscany to Scott, the giant among all novelists—Eastern tale-writers, Japanese and others, by whom Europe has profited—Praise of the art of Romance as a solace to man—The procession returns, a vast multitude, till all are merged and disappear in music.

'Mid the green shelter of calm summer dells
Touched by the morning rays, the twittering song
Of countless loves in glad contentment tells.
Nor less the crystal runs and pools among
Of Hermon's snow-fed streams, quick glances sent
Of scale and fin reveal a happy throng.
Each in its proper world, the element
To bird or fish decreed, accordant days
With its own bounds, its birthright, lives content.
Not so with foolish men, by self-taught ways
From nature's track divergent far, with toil
Purposeless, self-imposed, our pathway strays.
For glad contentment grief, for calm, turmoil,
Such harvest reaped is ours; the loftier aim
Too lofty planned, is but attainment's foil.
A note too highly pitched, O holiest name
Professed by mortal tongues, Philosophy,

Thine be all praise ; to us alone the blame.
We, while all else in earth, in sea, or sky,
Obey their being's law, with vain endeavour
Thy manifest law transgress, thy voice defy.
Thus while I thought, he whose true guidance ever
Led me from truth to truth, whom from my side
Nor measured space nor spirit-depths could sever,
Towards me turned and smiled, as smiles the guide
When some precipitous peak with toil ascended
Opens o'er lands unknown a prospect wide ;—
O smile all smiles above, by thee befriended
From height to height I climb, till the long way
In thee begun in thee be summed and ended !
Scattered the mist and gone ; once more the day
On grass and wild-flowers beamed, nor aught was there
Of columned portal seen or grave array.
Nor other sound but the cool rustling air
That freshly blew was heard, by mystic chaunt
Unvexed, and free as children's voices are.
Then as on glittering rains the coloured vaunt
Of glad Thaumantia's bow, or chequered dyes
When in 'mid air processioned banners flaunt,
So the whole radiance of those sunlit skies
With shifting hues was stained ; less gay the breast
Of that rare bird, last pledge of Paradise.
And as at morn by light and victory blest
The glad procession moves, memorial show
Of the risen God in manhood's form expressed,
So from the circling distance, row by row,
With myrtle crowned and bays, to music *meet*
Came a great crowd, nor swift their march nor slow.
Till in half circle near us drawn, their feet
Halted from onward course, and ranged around
Stood the bright throng in ordered state complete.
And the glad music rang with blended sound
Of joyful greetings given, as welcome made

When grate returning keels on native ground.
The while o'erhead in the pure air displayed
Those painted banners streamed, with emblems rare
Blazoned, and letters twined in curious braid.
"Those whom thou seest," thus to my questioning prayer
Answered my spirit's guide, "and whom thy eye
Seest not, in distance veiled and luminous air;
As flowers to fields, as sunlight to the sky,
Beauty and splendour give, so these to earth
Freshness and joy from age to age supply.
Foremost and best who now with answering mirth
Cheer the dull hours, and now with gentle tears
Slake to new life the dusty wayside dearth.
By these time's orbs reversed, return the years
Charactered large in fame; by these the dream
Of fancy wove in waking fact appears."
Nurse of romance, by Arno's storied stream
Late-born of race divine, thy first essay
To hundred tales attuned Love's single theme;
Till where the North's cold star with steady ray
Mirrors on the dark stream, whose bordered wave
Sunders the kindred realms of partnered sway,
Ettrick's dark glades and heathery slopes among
Was reared thy stateliest shrine; whence rising shone
Brightest and best on earth the visioned throng:
A giant shade o'er lesser forms alone
Towering in perfect might, so 'mid the rest
Monarch supreme, thy presence, Scott, was known.
Yet not unhonoured they nor few, the crest
Of the bright wave of thought, with quickening flow
Moved from the garrulous East to manlier West.
Here 'mid flower-blazoned flags in order go
Thy cinctured sons, Japan; nor honoured less
O'er half a world, the Seric dragons glow.
Here forms uncouth and garish hues express

What dreaming India saw; a strength and grace
Present, but masked in fancy's motley dress.
And where with mornless nights unequal days
Earth's narrower circle to her warrior brood
Alternate metes, walled in by icy space,
Even there of glorious deeds and hardihood
In strange adventure known, and love's delight,
Is the wild tale by fancy's art renewed.
And as on distant slopes the mirrored light
Casts a pale gleam, so Europe's withered age
From these some radiance draws in time's despite.
For not alone by verse divine the page
A healing gives to men, nor history's roll
Can the great thirst, the concrete want, assuage
Where yearns the imperfect to the perfect whole.
Yet these some solace bring, nor idly shed
By these are the bright drops from fancy's bowl.
Then as of nearing crowds confused the tread
Shook, where we stood, the ground, and once again
Music and song the approaching pageant led.
While from its further verge the teeming plain,
Now vaster grown and domed with purer blue,
Pennon and flag sent forth in mingled train.
Nor now of question made or answer new
Was need these bands to tell; the garb they bore
Their native land and age refigured true.
And first whom venturous heart, and mind of lore
Insatiate, by wide lands and lonely seas
The world's remotest chambers drove t' explore,
Nor scared by danger's scowl, nor witched by ease,
Followers of him, the wise, who unbeguiled
By Sirens' songs or beauty's witcheries
'Mid perilous seas and mountain waves up-piled
Held on his way's intent, till through the haze
Of twenty years dim loomed Thiaki's isle.[1]

[1] Ithaca.

O comrades mine and brothers true, by ways
Various to goals as various bound, to death
Untimely some, some to long years of praise;
Not history's stately roll nor poet's wreath
Your special crown outvies, whose just [award]
Makes straight th' unequal praise of earth, beneath,
'Mid the glad tenants of th' Elysian sward
Here, till fulfilled the lustral hour; to each
Portioned in restful life the fit reward.
All who high hopes by quickening deed or speech
On the dull earth as rays have cast, and brought
Hesperian fruit from the death-guarded beach;
Who to the world of sense, the world of thought,
Have given a wider realm, a dearer gain
Than Genoa's son for Spain's dull tyrant sought.
—Here stays perforce my song, for now the plain
With forms of light and beauty numberless
Was filled, as filled with waves the ocean main.
As when through terraced streets the people press
On to the central city square, where waits
A nation's saviour from her worst distress,
The Conqueror King, who from his country's gates
Repelled the intruding foe, and for despair
Wrested late triumph from th' unequal Fates:
On the great throne with trophies decked, and fair
With grateful wreaths, serene he sits, and sees
His own just pride in all reflected there.
Then as at noon's dead calm a gusty breeze
Sudden upwhirls the summer's dust, and wakes
To rustling sound and life the leafy trees;
So from all sides, as one, tumultuous breaks
A nation's just acclaim, a mighty cry
That of all praise one joy, one utterance, makes,
Till from its ordered place upbursting high
The full-blown music swells; the pomp and pride
Fused and transformed to living harmony;

So now the bannered crowd, the shrine, the throne
With her the spirit-queen, the pomp, the flowers,
Lost to all else, in music lived alone.
While from far depths as Zephyr's diamond showers
Descend in latter Spring, such music fell
As twines of Iris' rays th' Elysian bowers;
Or subtler yet than old Amphion's spell
When Thebes embodied song; fit dwelling wove
For those, who prisoned in earth's twilight cell,
Brightened its gloom with beams of mirrored Love.

CANTO X

Sadder regions now await us—We are on the sea-shore : a mysterious darkness arises over the landscape, mixed with lurid flashes —My guide explains that the five realms thus far passed belong to those whom Love will make perfect—Now follows the Sixth: that of those misled by Science ; their doom is to dwell in a world such as they planned—A momentary gleam ; a mystic conflict ; we pass over the black gulf.

Not without pain the things of pain in words
We image forth, and sadness told in verse
Sadness to him who sings and hears affords.
But sadder yet when, as a funeral hearse
Following a bridal show, the songster's lay
To gladness tuned, must pain and death rehearse.
Such now my task assigned ; nor light th' essay
Though by his aid upheld whose guiding hand
Led through all lustral realms my fateful way.
And thou, crowned leader of the conquering band,
Father of light and life, thy radiance shed
On the thick darkness of th' ill-destined land.
In the far distance now behind us spread
The mountain barrier lay ; the sea beside
Left but a shingly path to forward tread :
That sea by storm unvexed, unswollen by tide,
Whose depths with earthly date coeval here

The sevenfold realm, goal of earth's paths, divide.
Calm as the smile of sleeping child, and clear
As the child's wakening eye, the watery blue
Mirrored the azure-vaulted hemisphere.
Not the far isles of silver named, if true
The famed Milesian tale, more peaceful gleamed
When steered o'er Euxine depths the suppliant crew:
Nor e'er before in my sad heart I deemed
Such peace abode had found, that all endured
Of pain or toil, outfaded memories seemed.
Then as to near eclipse when most assured
Darkens the noontide day, so land and main
Grew dark to sight, by a strange gloom obscured.
Yet whence it came I knew not; cloud nor stain
Nor sign of tempest there, but as betrayed
To spell malign, dethroned the noontide's reign.
Toward my guide I turned, of speech afraid,
So heavy weighed the gloom; and thrice my lips
Failed of their utterance, thrice the task assayed.
Till thus; "What ominous shade, what sun's eclipse
Mars the fair prospect round, what demon power
In grasp malign the dying beauty clips?"
"Fear not," the Master's answer came, "the hour
Is short, though given to ill, but long shall last
The sequent good, and earth's atoning dower."
So through the thickening gloom we onward passed,
Nor from his hand my hand I loosed, till ended
Sheer on the beach our narrowing path at last.
But o'er the opposing wave in air extended
Something, I knew not what, so dense the gloom,
As from above let down to earth descended.
As the vast portal of some Memphian tomb,
But vaster, this; or as old legends tell,
The giant arch that spans the gulf of doom.
But on my ear through the far darkness fell
Such sound with measured throb, as when the blast

Tolls on the beacon lone the warning bell.
And as 'mid Adria's storms the bending mast,
Tipped with no friendly light the sails between
Glimmers, a sign of bale to eyes aghast,[1]
Such phosphor glare now far now nearer seen
Flashed through the curtained gloom, a messenger
Of unknown dread from 'yond the further screen.
And at that spectre flash meseemed the air
Pulsed to its beat, as when the large-winged bird
Of night with circling swoop regains her lair.
And but through the thick shade at times I heard,—
For sight was none,—the master's voice, the tone
That to fresh life my frozen pulses stirred,
Sure had I perished there, to senseless stone
By Gorgon fear congealed.

Here my guide bids me rest till a sign to advance is given.

"Now hear; by Fate's decree to thee revealed
Have the five realms their secret worth, whate'er
Life's proper aims to man's fulfilment yield.
In deeds of noblest name and public care
Was theirs on earth the choice; expectant now,
Till perfect found, in the first realm they share.
Next who th' all perfect from the starry brow
Of absolute beauty showed, in art to bide
Heirloom of earth, the second realm avow.
Then the great powers[2] to whom all else beside
Even as to gods bows down, of all that is
Blessing or curse, o'er the 'mid realm preside.
Last the high boon by favouring destinies
Given to the lords of thought or song, displays
Reflex and earnest of accomplished bliss.
Of all perfecting Love the upward ways

[1] S. Elmo's fire. [2] Love and Religion.

"Thus far hast thou beheld; all these by hope
Cleansed from the dust and stain of mortal days.
But other realms than these and other scope
Await thee now, where o'er dark seas outspread
In limitless seeming hangs the murky cope.
Here whom vain skill and vauntful science led
From life's true paths astray, and Nature's scroll
In earth's fair semblance writ have backwards read;
Who spirit in laws of sense would bind, and soul
In mindless force resume, and on the parts
Intent, neglect life's proper gift, the whole.
Dull eyes that beauty's rays admit not, hearts
Kin to the beasts that fade; a reason bound
In narrowest range that mind from sense disparts.
The life-fraught breeze of star-lit dawn, the sound
Of summer woods at noon, the painted scene
In myriad hues the sunset gold around,
The upward gaze of flowers, the innumerous green
Of the moist fields, the busy insect swarm
Of motley life the sheltering blades between;
The Winter's timely sleep, the breezes warm
Of Spring's return, the golden Autumn leaf,
The changeful sky, the wind-driven cloud, the storm,—
Rest to man's toil assigned, to woes relief,
As on the mother's breast the cradled child
Tended by Nature's joys and Nature's grief,
Founts of pure life in freshness undefiled;
—From these aside they turn, to barren waste
From their own birthright-pasture self-exiled.
A fevered youth's unrest, an age debased
To narrowest aims, till lustral periods spent
In what they loved have the marred lines retraced.
Till then to their ill choice the element
Conforms th' abode assigned, for Nature's range
Outgone, in their own work constrained and pent.
Ill hap the work, the workman ill, th' exchange

"That from the beauteous life, the light, the pleasure,
Heirlooms of men, would men and earth estrange."
Then I; "Master and lord, if granted leisure
Be to discourse awhile, with ampler key
Unlock, I pray, of this hid lore the treasure.
If ranked with things that are or things to be
What thou declaredst e'en now,—the mind perverse,
The ignoble task, the ruined world in fee,—
So, to the sunlit earth returned, my verse
May timely warning give, lest seeds of ill
Unwitting sown, for harvest bear a curse."
Thus while I spoke, a sudden wind and chill
From the far distance came, the woods among
As heard the screech-owl's cry in midnight still.
And as a star 'mid cloudy vapours hung
Distant and faint, or the brief-flashing ray
O'er Cambrian straits from Treser's watch-tower[1] flung,
So swift so slight the gleam that midmost way
O'er the drear gulf upborne, on quivering air
Fluttered awhile, then passed in gloom away.
Yet ere it wholly passed an upward stair
Reared on that dead sea-beach to heights denied
To upward gaze was given in presence there.
While as at fear's approach his father's side
Close seeks the shrinking child, in vague alarm
Nearer to him I drew, my guard, my guide.
But he not unforewarned with prescient care
Circled my waist, the while on mine his hand
With gentle pressure laid assured from harm.
Thus while we stood, as o'er the dusty land
Sweeps the wild Pampas storm, from high descended
A rushing night, swifter than lightning's brand;
Then all was lost to sense, confused and blended
Darkness and storm and flight, nor mine to tell

[1] Apparently Holyhead: *Treser* meaning the House of the Star.

What rage assailed, what escort wings defended.
Till the black gulf o'erpast what next befell
Be in this Pageant shown, so far approve
They at whose hest I write, the gracious spell
Woven of all life that beauty crowns with Love.

CANTO XI

A dismal landscape like the English "Black Country" is seen, filled with engines and works — the triumph of Applied Science and Machinery — Here are colossal bridges, crystal palaces,—all, vanity and vexation of spirit, contrasted with the charm of pure unspoiled Nature—The future of the indwellers revealed.

The MS. begins with a picture of Naples, but is incomplete.

How the great gulf we passed, how reached the hill
  Circling the realm of shade, is to the mind
That would recall, a doubt and mystery still.
As on lone mountain heights a vehement wind
  With darkest night conjoined, of when and where
Cancels the sense, till all, before, behind,
Is undistinguished blank; the travellers fare
  Onward, yet know not how, till sudden rise
Some welcome landmark through th' unfolding air;
Such was our way that to enquiring eyes
  Little revealed but gloom, though conscious sense
Told of swift change in half-seen phantasies.
High in 'mid space we seemed by strange suspense
  Borne on o'erarching span, with iron clank
And mandrake shrieks, and sulphurous vapours dense.
And onward whirled we passed from bank to bank
  Of the great chasm, where flitting bale-fires far

In fathomless depths of darkness rose and sank.
Till as o'er pest-stricken shores an evil star
  Motionless hangs, a ruddy light, that seemed
Purposeful placed, signed passage from afar.
Till where o'erhead the smoky lustre gleamed
  On a black soil and bare our further way
Was stayed, nor ill the end such course beseemed.
Like the fair land in England's happier day
  Once fair with grassy dell and streams, but now
Of blackness named, such scene around us lay.
While frequent ranged,[1] in far receding row
  Were ranged[1] the dens of toil, the labour vain
That ever sought to find yet knew not how.
A land where rest is not nor pause, a gain
  Still sought, eluding still, a shifting goal
Of the vexed heart, tired limbs, and failing brain.
Where to mere means the end, to parts the whole
  Postponed, is lost to view; where reigns supreme
Mechanic law, throned on the void of soul.
Where for the glorious sun, the connate beam,
  Man's heirloom health and strength, a deadly pall
Daylight and starlight shrouds in sulphurous steam:
Where the fair forms of life, the flowerets small,
  The mighty trees, the hedgerow's berried store,
The bushy glens where pleasant waters fall,
The grazing herds, the feathered joys that soar
  In air or perch the boughs, the life content
As nature gives to life, nor frets for more,—
All these for graceless forms of toil, intent
  On gain and gainful change and toilsome haste,
Bartered are found through this sad realm's extent.
And every joysome sound by moorland waste
  Or in deep thicket heard, or pastures green,
—Mirth answering mirth, and sport with sport enlaced
†Of bird or beast or man,—for sound obscene

[1] *Sic* MSS. :—a sign of unrevised work.

Of dull metallic roar, or discord shrill
Of wild ear-piercing shriek is heard between.†
And for each scent that evening flowers distill
From perfume-laden cups, the heavy air
Was thick with sulphurous reek and airs that kill.
And for the honeyed flow and savours rare
Of nature's ready feast, a poisoned sense
The palate filled, and craving thirst's despair.
And the soft touch of natural influence
In breeze or sunny beam or contact warm
Of life with living life, all these from hence
Were driven, as rose-leaves by November's storm;
And in their place collision harsh and rude,
And gestures rough that living grace deform.
Such was the nearer scene; but distant viewed
Vast piles of gathered wealth, and things that told
Of busy crowds around th' horizon stood;
Bridges of monstrous span, and iron mould,
In outstretched meanness, huge monotonies,
Their sullen length from bank to bank unrolled:
And serried chimneys tall, that the pure skies
Sully with vaporous breath, and at their feet
The sleepless glare of clanging factories.
Nor wanted high-built tower nor dome complete
In palace-semblance reared; but all, alas,
Were but a figured show, a hollow cheat.
Of painted metals vile and common glass
From base to glittering crown, an empty thing;
"The earth has bubbles, as the water has,"
Then spoke my guide; "What prize what failure bring
Science with skill combined, the golden age
Of Man o'er Nature, Master, Lord and King,
Prefigured here thou seest; when the blind rage
Of progress, change, and wealth, the threefold gin,
Shuts on the self-trapped life its iron cage.
For mind, mechanic skill, for rest, the din

"Of movement without end, for wise content
Glamour without, and craving void within."
Thus while he spoke, as who the purport meant
On symbol rock engraven, or painted scene
On crumbling wall, relates; his gaze intent
With narrowed eyes resumes, if aught unseen
By a first view may yet remain, in quest
Of the veiled Isis hid the folds between;
So with new sense of wonderment possessed
Again around I gazed, till darker grew
The heavens, and murkier burned the fires unblest.
Then as on blood fresh-shed a deadlier hue
Falls from a passing shade, within my breast
Darkened on my first dread a horror new.

I ask what race will be thus cursed, and if no deliverance will ever be—My guide promises final victory.

"But first through dateless hours of wintry night
Must the sad ages roll, till other stars
New influence shed from unimagined light,
Throes of a second birth, inglorious wars
With treason foul confused, and new disease
With famine joined, and all that slays or mars,—
Such harvest science brings; by such degrees
Fulfilled the promise old, that life transmutes
In the foul dream of Circe's witcheries.
O Eden earth to Hinnom, men to brutes
Changed by illusive spell, O bitter tree
Of knowledge, flowers ill-plucked, ill-tasted fruits,
Who shall thy venom purge, the captive free
From the dark spell, replume the silver dove
By thee despoiled and tarnished? who but he
The one, th' all-healing, all-restoring Love?"

CANTO XII

Figures appear huddled together—I question them: the chief answers that he and his comrades desired to frame a world where Man should reign supreme and free from higher interference, reducing everything to the Visible—Another now speaks: his aim was to supersede mind-work by machine-work—These are the Patriarchs of Steam and Rail—For this revolt against Nature the shades are condemned to restlessness of despair and hope—A third follows: he broke by the Electric Telegraph the bonds wisely set between nations—Then appears a vision of natural beauty in contrast.

With sights and sounds of cureless ill, that weighed
  Leadlike on sense and heart, the dreary scene
Of earth by man misused my eye surveyed.
As the mean foulness of a suburb green
  With burnt-out fire-works strewed, in trampled mire
Shows where the drunken night has noisiest been;
So grimed with crusted smoke, defaced by fire
  The beauty forged by man; earth, water, air,
Polluted all, dishonoured nature's pyre.
Wide was the range, and long I gazed, but there
  No form withal discerned, nor beast nor bird
Nor human shade moved on the level bare.
Then, as on far-off slopes an antlered herd
  Sudden appears, where long the huntsman's ken

Nought but grey rock and grassy tuft averred;
So 'mid the desolate stillness of a glen
Somewhat apart that lay, a gathered band
Were pent as huddled sheep in stony pen.
With downcast faces sad, nor foot nor hand
They moved, but each from each in thought apart
Pored on the blackness of the circling sand.
So by Cathedral gates or opening mart
Sit crippled forms and old, in memory dim
Retracing days that in glad life had past.
I saw, then wondering turned from these to him,
Light of my thoughts and ways, to ask and learn
What the presentment of that conclave grim.
But he, "From their own selves may question earn
The answer rightly sought, so with fresh gain
Of truth to th' upper world may'st thou return."
Thus having said across the blighted plain
The path he led to where, silent and grey,
In twilight semblance cowered those shadows vain:
Till near approach with greeting joined; but they
Approach nor greeting marked, as who th' intent
Saw not, or seeing cared not to repay.
Then with slow pause his forehead downward bent
Upreared who seemed the chief, and on my face
Fixed a dull stare of doubtful discontent.
And thus; "Thy profitless steps to this, the place
Of baffled hopes, what adverse power has brought,
Unwelcome witness of my life's disgrace?
Mine and who with me bide; for ours the thought
On man's own visible world; from none beside,
Spirit or god, or aid or hindrance sought
An order new to uprear, a crowning pride
Of science wed to skill, a world where man
Sole lord, with none should earth's empire divide.
O Titan-scheme forbid, heaven-blasted plan
Of Sennaar's legend-tower, on wings to flight

"Unequal, whelmed in gulfs Icarian!
Chiefest of these was I in Nature's spite
Distance and space to foil, and things apart
Wisely ordained, in rashness to unite;
Till all the daedal earth by Nature's art
Distinct, its various grace and life forgo,
Blent and confounded in one common mart.
Effaced the primal bounds, nor ocean's flow
Nor track of stoniest drought, might land from land
Longer divide, nor crest of pathless snow:
Till the rash boast of old Chaldeans' band
Should late fulfilment find, nor speech nor place,
Aught on Man's earth, exempt from man's command.
As of past rule each mark or sculptured trace
New lords with care remove, so save his own
Should man all right deny, all rule efface;
Nought but the visible left, nor shrine nor throne,
But mind's; an eyeless heaven, a rayless sun;—
O Nimrod tower, by nature's curse o'erthrown!"
He ceased, in sullen musings lost; but one
Beside him found in place, with sequent tale
Took up the theme by th' elder shade begun.
And said; "Whoe'er thou art, to the sad vale
Of man's decay self-wrought who mortal ear
Hast brought, if listening, chance may those avail
Whom earth's glad day-light cheers; attend and hear
What heard thou needs must write, the wretchedness
Of the great vaunt, fulfilled in ruin drear.
The god-apportioned toil, the daily stress
Of thought with labour joined, the apt consent
Of man with nature's partnered loveliness,
These I contemned, as childhood's slight content
Misprized in serious age; on wider gains
And vaster plans, so willed my greed, intent.
Machines not men my aim, 'twas mine t' attain
By mere mechanic force and sleight whate'er

"Had purpose given to living hand or brain:
Till as at wintry breath the garland fair
From the bald woodland drops, and loveliest shapes
Shrink to dead heaps, nor strength nor beauty there;
So art to mere devisement, men to apes,
Kingdoms to headless hordes, strength to decay
Shrunk, of a blighted vine the shrivelled grapes.
Rotten ere ripe the vintage; wretched they
That tainted wine who drink, and thirsting turn
From the pure draughts of nature's founts away.
Here their presentment true; look round and learn
Timely what they too late, to nature's law
Till scourged by pain our upward state return."
Thus while he spoke the circling shades I saw
In restless motion swayed, as when the wind
Bends the long grasses of the whitening shaw.
And some with looks that horror told behind
Turned a reverted gaze, and forward some
Leant as in hope a promised goal to find.
But more, as of all thought or feeling numb,
Mere shadows went or came; while rose and fell
As of vain gusts at eve the ceaseless hum.
Nor word distinct nor uttered speech to tell
Whence their complaint or why, but vague unrest
As the first loosening of a Circe spell.
But I with saddened thought and labouring breast
Beheld the ruin wrought, and mourned to see
How ill completion matched the will's behest;
And how from Nature's bounds by science free
Self-prisoned man remains, and less than man,
A withered dwarf, who more than god would be.
Till with faint voice scarce heard and aspect wan,
One who even thus of past pre-eminence
Some token gave, thus to my ear began.
"'Twixt land and land of space the sundering fence
Had wisest Nature reared, lest folly's taint

"Contagious grown should blot the birthright sense:
So the bright hues that Life's fair garden paint
With beauty's various flowers should safe remain
From spreading rust, and stain of mildew faint.
More even than those thou heard'st, the mighty twain
Patriarchs of steam and rail, did I the bound
Connatural set to earth-born man disdain.
Mine was the art that could in one confound
All diverse speech, all thought; the girdle mine,
The fatal chain, linked the wide world around.
As in besieging war from mine to mine
Is knit the slumbering death, that waked, confounds
In ruinous heaps the long defended line,
A moment past well ranged they stood, the bounds
To hostile force and envious onslaught set;
Now a mere mass confused in fenceless mounds.
So my far-reaching art, the coronet
Of science named, o'er earth's innumerous bloom
Of flower and fruit was cast, a tangling net,
Cast o'er a captive world; to equal doom
Wisdom with folly bound, till folly's voice
For truthful speech nor hearing left nor room.
But ye, dark powers of ill perverse, whose choice
Is with destruction made, who man with man
Through me in (self-wrought) ruin linked, rejoice."
Then at that uttered curse those spectres wan
That mistlike filled the vale, as tremulous heat
On noontide sands, their flickering dance began.
Till as an updriven wave with swift retreat
Draws speckled foam and sand, while towering high
From shore and sea the closing waters meet,
A weltering crest upchurned, where dazed the eye
As by the crash the ear, in fierce contest
Upheaved, self-tortured everlastingly:—
So from the gloom that veiled the spectral West
Outburst a whirlwind blast, that wildly driven

Chased all confused those phantom forms unblest,
Scattered and shred-like torn; and lo! the heaven
In sapphire dome unstained, and the pure air
With earth to earth-born man for birthright given.
Where now th' unnatured crowd? the tumult where
Of force from rest disjoined? around, above,
Is the great calm, unvexed by toilful care,
Best dower of renovate life to renovate Love.

CANTO XIII

I see a city of civilization, science, skill, wealth, ruled by the democratic assembly which disdains the past, and is ruled by no principle—Seated in chill light, in a robe figuring the descent of man from brutes, is Science, a changeful figure, throned as alone supreme and divine—A band of her followers is around; like Science, all bearing a withered bough—a branch of the tree of knowledge—Their grovelling nature-studies described.

City of man, not God, by wealth and skill
  Earth-born, earth-gathered, built,—thy golden walls
Shone on my vision from the frontier hill.
Far glittering roofs, wide domes, and windowed halls
  In labyrinth lines entwined, and factories
Piled with rich wares, and guarded arsenals,
And marts of ornate skill to longing eyes
  Set forth in broad arcades, and all of wealth,
Science, and keen device, the purposed prize,
And all that chemic lore or craft to health
  Can lend in boasted aid; and all that sense
Desires in feast avowed or solaced stealth.
Nor aught of peacock show or gay pretence
  Or specious gilded dross, or costly bait
To sensuous joy ordained, was wanting thence.
There too through many a pillared porch elate

In glittering ranges curved the illumined stage
Showed the bright lurements of theatric state.
And she, the late-born child of feverish age,
Th' orchestra, queen of sound, in gauzy chains
By science led, of music turned the page.
Nor far removed the echoing hall where reigns
Supreme the popular voice, a wordy throng
Gathered, whom more to note this verse disdains :—
They who the names of sacred power that long,
Watchwords of hero deeds, earth's nobler days
Led to high praise, besmirch with party wrong.
For here of ancient laws and form-fenced ways
Traced by ancestral care, the service true
Of old obedience, and tradition's haze
Fringing with rainbow hues the distant view
Till as from bud the flower, from flower the fruit,
Continuous blends the old with order new,
Nor part had here nor place ; uptorn the root,
Withered the stem, the flower ; and in their place
The popular rule, the many-headed brute.
Of shrine or temple nought, of artist grace
Wed to the nobler thought, of reverence paid
To birth or age nor memory here nor trace.
As fish in ocean's depths, or beasts in glade,
Or birds in limitless air, nor guide nor chief
Who own, a headless horde ;—by sun or shade
As sand by winds upheaved ;—or autumn leaf
Self-sundered from the sap-giving stem, or aught
Than these more unrestrained, more vain, more brief.
City of men, thy children such ! so wrought,
A ship of fools, thy state, with idle winds
Distent thy sails, thy hold with ruin fraught.
Then as a tempest-flash well nigh that blinds
The unexpectant eye, when prone the rain
Descends, and cower 'mid huddled flocks the hinds,
So from th' horizon of that blasted plain

Even to the central domes that prouder rose
Than Thebes or Ilion to th' Orphéan strain,
A mirrored radiance shone; its source who knows
Let him reveal, I may not; but the glare
As with an iceberg's chill my senses froze.
Shuddering I gazed and wondered much, for there
Midmost that joyless night a woman's shape,
But queenly proud, as pampered harlots are,
Enthroned I saw; o'er her large form a cape
Broidered with strange device was thrown, whereon
Were imaged worm and fish and bird and ape;
Each interwoven and blent with each, that none
Could last from first divide; a pedigree,
Though old, unhonoured; though divergent, one.
Such was the robe, the broidery such; but she
Stranger herself by far, nor to one form
Constant, but various more than cloud or sea;
Now, as when erst beheld, a shape difform
From the high crag she frowned, with bat-like wings
Shadowing the smoke wreaths of th' involving storm,
And now with stateliest calm, that sceptred kings
Might from afar revere, a virgin Queen,
Greater than they, supreme o'er earthly things:
And now with shameless front and flaunted sheen
Of mimic pearl and gem, a harlot old,
But clad in youth's array, that Power was seen.
And a great crowd of semblance manifold,
Yet in one livery clad, her throne around
Clustered as trooping sheep in evening fold.
While from all sides to music tuned a sound
That reverence told and worship, to mid air
Went up, like incense-mist from hallowed ground.
Yet was no lord, no god, no ruler there
In worship owned by these; nor other shrine
Confessed, nor throne, nor rival, nor compeer.
She only great, she glorious, she divine;

And on her brow and on her vestment's hem
Science, her name, was writ, her empire's sign.
Round her pale brows a flickering diadem
Of that cold light was twined, and her right hand
Held stripped of flower and fruit a sapless stem.
Then while with wondering gaze the pomp I scanned
Of Time's last portent queen, from out the rest
Came forth with reverent step a marshalled band.
As stunted trees on the bare wind-blown West
Of Mona's farthest ledge, warped and awry,
Unkindly skies and meagre soil attest,
Such the procession seemed, that to the eye
Small solace gave or meed, yet was their mien
Proud, as of conquerors come from victory.
And with a several offering each the Queen
Approaching, homage made; but she more cold
Than wintry moon looked down on all serene.
But all alike, subjects or Queen, in hold
That withered branch displayed, which erst I knew
Her sceptre-wand, decked with false pearls and gold.
Then thus my guide, "Where first the quickening dew
Gemmed with its tears earth's infant face, and where
The central fount its fourfold stream upthrew,
With scented rind and leaf and blossom fair,
But most with clustered fruit, conspicuous grew
That branch, thou wondering seest, now peeled and bare.
Of Knowledge this the tree, pleasant to view,
But death to taste; so found the twain who erst
Ventured the deed that yet the nations rue.
Accursed the tree, the branch, the fruit; accursed
She thou behold'st, of that ill growth the soul,
Of man's mis-worshipped idols last and worst."
Yet as he spoke, like marsh-fed mists that roll
Up the hill-sides at dawn of autumn day,
O'er that great crowd a heavy vapour stole.
And first the eyes that wilful turned away

From nature's offered scope to things removed
From human sense and life's connatal ray,
By measureless space estranged, or harmful proved
To daily sense of life, with envious gaze
Prompt to explore, by vain compeers approved,—
To the fair robe that Nature's form arrays,
Beauty of field or grove, and living grace
Were feelingless grown, confused in self-made haze.
And every power from ordered range and place
To wider scope outstretched, was warped and marred,
Like a strained chord, a mis-tuned diapase,
From their true aim and healthful act debarred,
Till to the likeness of their work subdued
In their own lore they find their fit reward.
And some with purpose fixed and serious mood
Pored on earth's writhing worms, or hour by hour
Watched through the optic glass corruption's brood.
And some the vigorous leaf or painted flower
Keen to dissect and class, of heart's delight
Stripped the gay broidery of the garden bower.
And some the inmost life, the conscious light
Of the great Lamp of mind, with atom dust
Smothered, or gave to chance and bestial might;
Duty to need-born custom, love to lust,
Reverence to coward fear, and beauty's sense
To gain or use, scornful aside they thrust:
These in the infinite night's magnificence
A clockwork saw, no more; in the bright sun
A chemic force, a vapour rare or dense.
Till, as the camp-lit watch-fires one by one
'Twixt midnight fade and dawn, the ready foe
Of onslaught sure, waits till the last be gone,—
So with their worshipped Queen that hapless show
Vanished in darkness lost; a leaden weight,

Sunk in the fathomless ocean depths below.
Such progress Science brings, such triumphs wait
Her banner's onward march, such guerdon prove
Who by her false-fires led, man's birthright state
From Nature's scope divorce, from Nature's Love.

CANTO XIV

I ask if any deliverance is proposed for these souls ; my guide seems to promise final lustration—Again as a dream I see the great City ; but now prepared for war—We enter, and see all scientific contrivances to kill and maim : Destruction throned on the seat of his consort Science—From this magazine of death goes forth an army, and I hear the roar of a ruined world, and see the fall of the city.

Again I ask my guide if no lustral ascent from this evil realm is allowed ?

" In the seven realms of trial state whate'er
Thou seest," his answer came, " to ends of good
Ordained, finds harvest in th' eternal year."

He points upward—A mist overspreads the plain, and again reveals that great City, but not the throne of the crowned phantom :

Only from mart and square and lengthening street
Such sound uprose as jutting rocks among
Tells where opposing waters plunge and meet.
Of horse, and rattling wheel, and noisy throng,
Was now the unresting roar ; and heard between
Were laugh and wailing loud, and tramp and song.
Then with half-careless brow and smile serene
Thus spoke my guide : " Those noisy walls within

"Much to thy sight decreed remains unseen.
Here let us enter now, nor fear the din,
Nor aught uncouth behold; a phantom show
Of substance void, to morning dreams akin.
As in frore Arctic seas who foremost go,
Sundered awhile, by snow-reflected gleam
In air pourtrayed their lagging comrades know,
So what thou here behold'st itself a dream,
Yet as of imaged truth,—alas that e'er
Should true with false be blent,—the substance deem."
Thus while he spoke a portal wide and fair
O'erarched our forward way, that street by street
Led up the town, till reached the central square.
Yet less the thronging crowd, though dense, our feet
Delayed than wondering dread, as pause and gaze
Who on their road some hideous portent meet.
For not the Lycian cave nor Cretan maze,
Though that Chimaera's fires, the portent fell
This of Pasiphäe held, as Grecian lays
Of old have sung, or storied legends tell,
Could with the works of ill, the dooms compare
By man for man forged in hate's citadel.
For all that rends or maims, or wide in air
Scatters the lacerate life, or swift from far
Wings iron death, was piled in order there.
And as o'er mangled crowds the demon car
Moves 'mid Orissa's palms, so crushed and prone
The nations lay 'neath science-hounded war:—
While veiled in poisonous smoke, even on the throne
Where erst his consort sat, with horror crowned
O'er a slain world Destruction reigned alone.
"And this," so spoke my guide, "the ultimate bound
Of man's research unblest, the freedom late
From Nature's rule in death's own slavery found.
Nor long the path, nor doubtful traced;—the state
Of its past self despoiled, of memory's wealth

"And art and joy and love made desolate.
And the sure growth of sequent years, the health
Treasured from age to age, for feverish dreams
Of empty strife exchanged by thriftless stealth.
Till strikes the fated hour, and from th' extremes
Of greed and hate together clashed, the brand
Flashes o'er blackening walls and blood-stained streams,
And wreaked th' unnatured spite, the ruin planned
By man's unresting foe, the power accurst
With mortal life knit in coeval band."
While thus he spoke, my wandering eyes that erst
Confused the complex scene surveyed, as who
At the full fount chokes from o'er-satiate thirst,
Now steadier grown, the motley scene and new
Had part with part compared; and still the more
I gazed, with terror mixed amazement grew.
By sea, by land, by mountain plain or shore,
For peace, for war, whate'er may blight or kill,
Better in ignorance hid, destruction's store,
All that mechanic craft can frame, and skill
Of chemic lore combine, with care upstored,
A prisoned fiend apt to the jailer's will,
The all-solvent force from hell's long guarded hoard
Won to the winner's bane;—all these, and worse
If worse might be, made up the pile abhorred.
Knowledge of death, not life, in thee the curse
Fulfilled of that bad hour to man that gave
A reprobate self, a ruined universe!
Then as by perilous seas Iona's cave,
Or pillared Staffa, thine, when fronts the moon
Heaven's western sun, fills to th' o'erswollen wave,
So to war's challenge cry and answering tune
Of fife and drum and brazen instrument
Rolled on what seemed a demon host, and soon
Was lost in sulphurous mist; before it went
Such roar as when from Indian skies descends

In darkness wreathed the typhoon element :—
Fields it lays waste, forests uptears, and rends ;
Village and tower and town and shrine of stone
Levelled with earth in heaped confusion blends ;
The scream of woman's fear, the shriek, the groan
Of wretches crushed, the mingling sounds of doom
In the undistinguished roar are heard as one.
Such was the roar went up from the deep gloom
Of victors shroud, and vanquished ; such the dirge
Of a slain world, knelled o'er dead Nature's tomb.
Then, as 'mid seas across from the far verge
Where broods the rising storm, a lengthening train
Their landward way the clamorous sea-fowl urge,
While from his cottage door th' upgazing swain
Fain would their number count, while band on band
Succeeding still makes his fond labour vain,—
So wild, so numerous, through that spectral night
New shapes of shapeless ill, of substance bare
And form, momently mocked the straining sight.
The crash of roadside ruin, the swift despair
Of ships together hurled, when all they hold
Of youth and strength and hope and life and care
Sinks to dark death, in trackless waters cold,
Th' explosion's sudden crash, when torn and rent,
Scattered the limbs that late that force controlled,—
And mixed with these the subtler poison sent
Unseen, unfelt, unknown, from fount and rill,
Sure vengeance of the misused element.
And earth's life-bearing bosom, the breasts that still
Were to her offspring health and strength and joy
Tainted and shamed mere poison-drops distil.
Fulfilled the cyclic course ; not Asian Troy
Nor Byrsa's [1] walls foredoomed, nor aught that years
Can frame, ages perfect, an hour destroy,
So desolate lay, so low, as o'er thy peers

[1] Carthage.

Exalted once, now lower fallen than they,
Worthiest of doom predestined, worthiest tears!
—Again I looked; with pallid light the day
Bordered the circling hills, and o'er a land
Strewed with mere wrecks diffused a doubtful ray.
Not desolate more nor hopeless by the strand,
Moeris,[1] of thy lost waters, far outspread
Recordless ruins break th' encroaching sand.
'Mid a dead world, a city of the dead,
Tomb of itself and them, by those who built
Levelled in dust, self-dried the fountain bed.
Then spoke my guide; "The hopes, the life-blood spilt,
Are but the debt repaid, the ransom fee
Of nature's laws annulled, man's treason-guilt.
In Eden's tainted bower the poison tree
Had else unhewed remained, and age by age
Such fruits had borne as by Zeboim's sea
The kindred groves accurst;—the jealous rage
Of international strife, the cruel skill
Of treacherous hate, the vengeful heritage
Of trampled pride and ill outfaced by ill,
These were the doom of earth, through boundless time
Accursed, a wandering star, a frustrate will.
Now by swift death to life recalled, the crime
Atoned, from nature's bounds no more to rove
Is the new birth, a renovate star sublime
In the pure depths of empyrean Love."

[1] A lake in ancient Egypt.

CANTO XV

The storm has passed—Another female figure appears; lawless Republican Freedom — She relates her history — Wicked passions and political falsehoods surround her—They fade, and a lovely vision of the life after Nature, which alone is true Freedom, follows.

YET once again thou bid'st me, once again
  Lord of my song, my vision's arbiter,
Of that sad realm renew th' ungrateful strain.
Not mine to choose the key; all sounds that are
  Joyous or sad, discord or harmony,
Each at thy will their pinions fold or stir.
Then while alone beneath that other sky
  Not of man's earth we stood, and on the space
Open and bare the shadows glided by,
But of that whirlwind crowd, the hideous chase
  Of spectre deaths unnamed, of the great storm
O'er-curtaining all, was there nor sign nor trace,
But in its stead what seemed a female form,
  But armed with sword and helm, and countenance
With envious sneer and hasty wrath difform,
Stood where of late that town; to heaven her glance
  Upturned defiance told, unbound her hair
Streamed as a Maenad's in the drunken dance.
Wrought to her hand a ready axe and bare

Gleamed at her side; in her right hand a scroll
Banner-like shifted to the shifting air.
And many dates and names that boastful roll
Now here now there displayed, but most as read
From memory passed to mere effacement's goal.
Drunken, but not with wine, her restless tread
Uncertain moved of aim; her feet beneath
Piecemeal with broken shards the ground was spread.
And trampled laws were there, and ancient faith
Trodden in dust, and loyal vows and true
Cancelled, and soiled with blood a kingly wreath
While with no certain sound a trumpet blew
Fantastic march and self-involved, that still
Th' advancing step in backward circles drew.
As who some wretch distort with cureless ill
Meets, and the foulness seen, the more abhorred,
The more to gaze compels th' unwilling will:
So was I then, nor less my vision's Lord
Scanned that unlovely form, nor to my look
Enquiring turned, by sign replied or word,
That from his silence added fear I took.
Nor wonder ye that hear, for things of dread
Owned by immortals how may mortals brook?
Then where we stood, with bold and sudden tread
That form towards us came, in haunted room
As some foul spectre nears the sleeper's bed.
And a chill air as from a vaulted tomb
Upbreathed around it spread, and all around
A sound of moving wings, unseen in gloom.
And now 'twixt us and it of sundering ground
Ten paces scarce remained, when bold and clear,
Ere question asked, her answer utterance found.
"From earth, my proper kingdom, brought, and here
In visioned form compelled, in me the power
Behold that was and is and yet shall be.
When first, as legends tell, in Eden's bower

"Was the great freedom won that man from law
Loosed, from the lord the slave, mine was the hour;
The victory mine, the witching spells that draw
All noblest things to shapeless heaps, as spread
Swift floods in level lowlands, fire in straw.
So secret sure, so swift, each trusted creed,
Each rule of firmest stay, altar and throne,
Fall in the day by fate and me decreed.
Till the last links of custom's honoured zone
Are loosed, and mightiest nations, taught by me,
Their parent past and proper selves disown:
From all that binds, restrains, and orders, free
As dust that late was man, or shifting sand
Drawn grain by grain to the undiscerning sea.
The while all stateliest things, all fairest planned,
Heirlooms of time, a nation's diadem [1]
Shivered by me in fragments strew the strand.
The wrongs of gods and kings, the rights of man,
My watchwords these, my spells; with these of yore
In the great strife I led destruction's van.
When the blue waves that lave Corcyra's shore
Reddened with blood,[2] and shamed Miletus [3] viewed
The nameless horrors of her harvest floor,—
These were my first essays; in mightier mood
Surpassed, when at my word the tribune band,
Rome, from thy rock drew streams of Roman blood,
When as cut flowers that strew the summer land
Mown by the reaper's scythe, thy noblest peers
Corpse-strewed the halls their fathers' pride had planned
And still as to the load of added years
Bows down th' enfeebled earth, till wholly fail
The central power that yet the frame uprears,
Honour and truth and law, like phantoms pale
Of a lost world, from the uncreating spell

[1] *Sic* MS. [2] The famous massacre in B.C. 427.
[3] Sacked by Darius in B.C. 494.

"Of Freedom's dreaded name retire and quail.
What fabric mine beyond th' Atlantic swell
Of Indian blood compact and Afric's groans
Let my great shrine, the first Republic, tell.
But chief where on the Abbey's [1] desecrate stones
Women with children, maids with helpless age,
To Freedom's birthday paean tuned their moans.
Since then my forward track from [age to age] [2]
Prospers, and march of mind and liberty
In blood and spoil are marked in History's page.
As creeps the fire through rotten wood and dry,
As filters poison through the tainted stream,
As breathing death the plague from cloudless sky,
So through all things that best and fairest seem
My sure corruption spreads, till fade from earth
Empires and faiths, an unreturning dream;
And precious things long prized, and things of worth
Mine to debase, by me dissolved and ended
In the wide death that knows no second birth."
Thus while she spoke the ghastly forms that tended
Unseen before her song, unnatured will,
Envy, and idiot pride with rapine blended,
And the dark thoughts that worm-like feed on ill,
And bitter hates and loathsome phantasies,
And trust for show betrayed, and joys that kill,
And party froth of popular speech, and lies
Worshipped for very truth, and last despair,
Swarmed round their worshipped Queen as carrion flies
Round their foul food; all distant semblance fair
From that proud form they took; the mirror they
Of her true self, through them revealed and bare.
So passed the portent on, while far away
E'en to the visible marge its path along
Trampled in blood th' adoring nations lay.

[1] Massacre of the clergy by the Republicans (September 1792) in the Carmelite Abbaye. [2] *Zone* in MS.

What next I saw nor mortal tongue nor song
To mortal ears attuned may tell; nor how
Slain the foul slayer, avenged the secular wrong.

But my guide does not enable me to tell more.

As who at dawn awaking with quick start
Feels in himself the dream he dreamed, yet nought
Imaged recalls, nor part can join with part;
So what my soul unchanged retains, my thought
Fails to retrace; a treasure stored, but lost
The key, and memory's blank with memory fraught.
Then linked once more the chain: that evil host,
With her the band who led, that false though fair
Phantom of self-styled Freedom's conquering boast,
Dead with the dead themselves had slain, even there
On earth mere hollow semblance lay, to dust
Aptly dissolved, even as their triumphs were.
And in their place and hers, as from dull rust
Glitters a furbished brand, a loveliness
Human-divine revealed old Nature's trust.
In its own beauty veiled that form; nor less
All hearts to her she drew; before her way
Bloomed with new flowers the wreck-strewn wilderness.
And as a blackening shadow-line that lay
Late on the green hill side, before the breath
Of sunlit heaven, unmarked dissolves away,
So in that vision new those forms of death
Dissolving passed from sight, and heavenly life
By earthly life was mirrored from beneath.
Uptorn the poisonous root, the knowledge rife
With doom, earth's primal wrong, and wiser Man
No more with Nature held unnatured strife:—
Till to the modulate note with which began
Life's music, moved the dance, and freshly wove
Nature and ordered law the purposed plan
Of the high power that circles all in Love.

CANTO XVI

A vision of England's glory, and a lament—A land of wonderful beauty is now seen, and a Siren voice invites me to the happiness of the Seventh Realm—I feel the attraction, calling me to yield: but my guide wakens me from the charm.

Empress of land and waters, foremost thou
In earth's processioned pride, all else to thee,
Subjects or foes, allies or rivals bow;
England, Time's sceptred heir, of Liberty
Wedded to Law the home; by thee the vaunt
Of Rome or earlier Greece is held in fee.
Who with just pride behold'st thy standards flaunt
Of every sky the arc, from the mid zone
Broadened to either winter's year-long haunt.
Mother of states and statesmen, from thy throne
O'er thought and deed supreme, wisest and best
Thee with forced praise earth's jealous Balaams own.
Phoenix of ages, in thy island nest
Once and again renewed from fiery pain,
Fresh plumed with mightier wings and prouder crest:
And if of earth's cloud fabrics might remain
Eternal aught, 'twere thou, 'mid things of change
Changeless, a rock 'mid ocean's shifting plain.
Land of my birth, first known, first loved, the range

Of treasured childhood's dreams, long exiled years
That first best vision dim not nor estrange.
Whence then th' o'ershadowing gloom, the formless
fears
Like night birds winged at even, that o'er my though
Darkened, and filled my gazing eyes with tears?
When now to that sixth realm a visitant brought
Where science finds her meed, the penal doom
Of that proud city in presence thus was wrought?
Not thus, not thus thy type; yet 'mid the gloom
That whelmed the visioned sense, methought I knew
Writ with thy name, even thine, a Titan tomb.
Through moonless nights of shade in doubtful view
So lours the Shinaar pile, memorial lone
Of banded pride, earth's heaven-assailing crew.
Like effort, like reward; the flower o'erblown
Falls from th' unpetalled stalk, the statued form
By its own weight shivered and overthrown.
And in the brightest sky the wildest storm
Broods unsuspect though near, and in the vest
Of gold-throned empire lurks the charnel worm.
What worm thou know'st, what tempest:—for the rest
Fulfil thy portioned task, the destiny
Warp of earth's portioned woof for worst or best.
Changed now the scene, the song; Another sky
Bent o'er us where we stood, another land
Worthy that heaven in beauty took the eye.
But how from that dark region's farther strand,
Where late our visioned path had been, to this
Sudden we passed, not mine to understand.
Behind us pain and ruin, before us bliss
Myriad in form yet one, so heaven and earth
Mingled in each an individual kiss.
As a fair babe at earliest hour of birth
Is beauty, life and joy, before us smiled
Fresh to th' embrace that love-irradiate mirth.

Not the fair land[1] that of their course beguiled
Ithaca's homeward crew, nor that by God
Planted in midmost of Thelassar's wild,
Could with this garden vie; nor that, th' abode
Of Perse's daughter-witch,[2] nor the far groves[3]
Spoiled by Alcides of their golden load.
But these were fairer found; the fancy roves
Vainly their like to find, all ages tries,
All beauteous things, nor aught as these approves.
Ah me! from the dark realm of worse surmise
What difference this, what joy, when seen again
Green earth, bright flowers, pure rivulets, azure skies.
As who some landscape rare of mount or plain
Known but by name now first beholds, and more
Than thought had given to hope, accounts his gain :—
From the dim horrors of the unnatured shore
So I to nature's best restored; for naught
Valued[4] to this all joys esteemed before.
And sense on wakening sense and thought on thought
Crowded in throng confused, that to my heart
Faintness for very joy an instant brought,
And but the brother guide whose guardian art
Failed not, upheld me then, nor sense nor breath
Had mine remained, so keen the pleasing smart.
On a high ledge we stood; the plain beneath
In myriad hues, all lovely, to the sun
Sparkled with gems woven in innumerous wreath,
And meads and brimming streams, and flowers that shone,
And ripening orbs of gold, and tufted glades
From the hill marge to the vision's utmost zone,
In varying beauty spread, of lights with shades
In just proportion joined, that once beheld

[1] Ogygia.
[2] Aeaea, Circe's dwelling.
[3] Hesperides.
[4] Compared.

From lovesick memory passes not nor fades.
Then while entranced I gazed, motionless held
By that fair scene, a sound on odours rare
Pillowed, as smoke of incense wreaths upwelled;
The while the rustling leaves at dance, the beat
Of wavelets on their banks, the answering cries
Of happy birds, mazed in their green retreat,
And other sounds attuned to harmonies
Confusedly heard with sound of voice, that lent
To leaves and birds and wavelets apt replies,
Their strong enchantment wove; and lovelier bent
O'er me the vaulted blue, that my whole being
Forth from itself to greet that music went.
Its own surcease by its own act decreeing,
Such magic drew me on, from fear and pain
And forward hope and past remembrance freeing.
The while, now first distinct, a Siren strain
Borne on the perfumed air to where I stood
Sent out the enchantment of the midmost plain.
And then the words I heard; "From labours rude
Here the repose attained, the joy, the rest;
Here the fair prime of love and youth renewed;
As from long fray returned when red the West
Gleams o'er the hard-fought field, to dreamless sleep
Sinks the tired warrior on the loved one's breast.
Such welcome thine, such calm; the perilous steep
Hast thou secure o'erpast, the guardian hours
For thee with us inviolate refuge keep.
For thee the couch prepared; less fair the flowers
That healing breathe and balm where beauty's Queen
Bends o'er Adonis in Idalian bowers.
Ambition's doubtful prize, Art's painted screen,
Love's passionate draught, Religion's visioned hope,
Slow toil of knowledge stored, and Science keen,—
The sixfold task on which heaven's pitying cope
Looks down, but little heeds, withal hast thou

"Traversed, the aimless aim, th' unequal scope.
Here then thy sail be furled; the o'erhasty vow
Best when forsworn fulfilled; life's proffered joys
Be thine, th' Hesperian isle, the lotus bough.
Here where no satiate zest the palate cloys
Ever to new renewed; nor age nor care
This garden blight, nor envious time destroys."
Thus sang the secret voice till the warm air
Was drunken sweet with song, and all my heart,
Tangled with joys new found, lay captive there.
Till by a touch aroused, with sudden start
I turned, and met those eyes whose searching ray
Pierced my remorseful soul with conscious smart.
As bent on deed forbid or harmful play
Shrinks back the self-chid child, if chance he sees,
When least bethought, his father's grave survey;
So from that sensuous dream of careless ease
With shame suffused I woke, and gazing sought
In that loved face from the false charm release.
Then he to whom th' unspoken words my thought
In its true self declared, to this my wound
Healing and balm with ready answer brought.
"Fear not," he said, "nor faint; the purpose sound
In weakness perfects strength; the lily flower
Sprung from the soil, a stainless queen is crowned.
O'er life of sense compact that sense has power
Nor wonder much nor blame; what child of earth
But smooth to rough and sweet prefers to sour?

But the absolute Will has given thee a nobler nature and better light.

Here where all pleasing lures of sound and sight,
Odour, or touch, or taste, entwine the chain
Where phantom joys with lustral pains unite,
Whate'er old poets sing or legends feign

"Sirens or Lotus groves, or Circe wiles,
End and fulfilment in this realm attain.
Here who from life's due task and prize the wiles
Of the great sorceress prisoners held, in sorrow
Masked by lost joy abide their cleansing while.
Till pure the spirit greet th' ethereal morrow,
Bright star of stainless dawn; till then the grove
Thou seest confines their range, compelled to borrow
From folly past late lore of ransoming Love."

CANTO XVII

Into this Paradise we descend—A Satyr guides: an illusive sense of delight seizes me—I see a visionary plain, with a sky of wonderful tints—This mirage vanishes in white light: the forest reappears, but glowing with rainbow colours, and flitting forms of beauty between—The sensation of Youth comes over me—The Satyr explains that this is a kind of twilight region between the Realms and the abyss lying between earth and heaven—The indwellers seem to have, and yet to have not, every sensuous pleasure, whilst awaiting final lustration—The Satyr and all his kind are, however, fated to pass away.

THUS while he spoke such breeze as wakes to song
The summer birds at dawn, from off the height
Passed in long waves the forest tops along.
And glossy leaves and flowers embossed in white
Rustled and waved around, till all the wood
Thrilled with expectance of some new delight.
So from the rock-faced ledge in cheerful mood
Downward our steps we turned, till on the plain
Knee-deep in scented herbs and flowers we stood.
A narrow space we trod; in serried row
Before us rose the trees, the rock behind,
That exit thence or entrance none might know.
Silent awhile we paused, the doubtful mind
Holding in equal poise, perchance to wait
Or road-directing chance, or guide assigned.

Nor long ere issuing forth, in form and gait
Nor human all nor bestial, one that seemed
Of Satyr brood as rustic tales relate,
Naked before us stood; in sunlight gleamed
Hazel his laughing eyes; who scanned his face
In youthful mask had quaint Silenus deemed.
No word he spoke, but as in natural grace
All forest things are fair, a willing guide
Waiting he stood, self-offered there in place.
Then by a narrow cleft erst undescried
Midmost the grove he led, 'twixt branch and bough
Gliding secure, as woodland serpents glide.
And still from step to step I wondered how
Following unchecked we passed, where else the eye
Mere hindrance found, but ready access none.
And overhead enlaced the branches high
Shut out the vaulted heaven, and from behind
Closed on our path their green perplexity.
The while that sylvan form of gentlest kind
Oft turned our way t' assure, with merry look
As a quick sunbeam glanced through cloudy blind.
And aye from that bright smile presentment took
My soul of near delight, and inly thought,—
If such the outward clasp, how fair the book!
How long we fared or far, who thither brought
Our steps may rightliest know; but I for joy
Of time or measured space accounted nought.
For fear, and fear-bred care, and doubt's annoy
Could here no entrance find, nor weariness
Might with earth's dross that perfect hour alloy.
O happy rest, though vain! O nothingness
Of earth's existence fitting meed repaid!
How shall my verse thy joys, thy pains express?
So on we passed, and still the close-fenced glade
More distant view denied, and oft the cry
Of some hid bird in laughing mockery played.

And oft aside I looked if chance to espy
Some human guide the trees between; but none
Save that quaint shape, the wood's own progeny.
Nor he to question asked or speech begun
Answer or heed returned, but smiled as who
Silence had vowed till task or pastime done.
At last on either hand the opening view
Gave a great plain to sight, if plain it were,
Or vaporous film compact to form and hue.
Not the cloud-domes upbuilt in Indian air,
Crimson and pink and gold, where rests at even
The out-journeyed sun, might with those tints compare.
If unsubstantial earth or solid heaven
That gem-bespangled floor, those crags up-piled
Of glittering pearl with glancing fire-streaks riven,
Was what I then beheld, a phantom wild
Where truth was not, nor being, nor firm abode
Of life with joy, of their old strife beguiled,—
I knew not nor enquired; so changeful glowed
The rainbow-textured domes, so bright the lines
Where through the clefts the golden pavement showed.
Then as from spray to spray, when warmer shines
Th' encroaching day, the night-embroidered frost
Melts off confused from the sun-fronted pines;
So all that varied weft, broken and crost
As by some eddying under-flow, from sight
In one white radiance passed confusedly lost.
And the fair woodland from th' encircling height
First seen, returned to view, but fairer now
Than maiden coy new decked for love's delight.
For where that mist had been, each summit bough,
Hill top or palace spire, was wrapped and hung
With tangled shreds of heaven's Thaumantian bow.
And the broad leaves and large-eyed flowers among
Flitted translucent gleams, that with the flowers
In brightness blent, as music blends with song.

And shapes half seen, half guessed, by glades and bowers
Naked or gaily dight, as those beheld
In haunted gardens at still noontide hours.
I gazed and gazed again; with pleasure swelled
Almost to pain my heart, and to my eyes
Tears, to my mind far-memoried thoughts upwelled;
The days when youth and I were one, the skies
Of Spring o'erarching Spring, the untarnished ray
That life to earth, light to the sun supplies.
O gift but once bestowed, unmorrowed day
Quick dawned, darkened ere noon; O crowning bloom,
Of the green stem fulfilment and decay!
Yet of that perished flower the lost perfume
Again was mine to prove, from time's restraint
Freed in the pageant realm of meed and doom.
Thus while I stood, that guide whose semblance quaint
Of twofold kin compact resumed in one,
A forest birth, as wild-flower free from taint,
Fruitful as earth, glad as the quickening sun,
Towards me turned his face, of all beside
Heedless, and thus with human speech begun.
"Earth-born, to thee, not to thy spirit-guide
Of earth exempt, my words; in kindred blood
Is kindred speech, to alien race denied.
Know then the rocks o'erpast, the silent wood,
The rainbow mists, the meteors in their sport,
Guard the seventh realm placed in the lustral flood.
The ultimate limits these, th' extreme resort
Of life by time distinct, the boundary this
Ere reached the portals of th' ethereal court.
Behind, the multiple forms, before, th' abyss
Formless to mortal sense; betwixt the twain,
Twilight of each, thou seest the bowers of bliss.
Here the last flush of being's feverish pain
Dies in the calm eterne, as lost at morn

"Melts into day's pure light the lunar stain.
The restless toil, the care, the strife, the scorn
Enter not here nor bide; the painted fly
Here has no sting, the blossomed rose no thorn.
As sleeps the child secure, his mother nigh
Watchful to tend and guard, so from all wrong
Sure fenced the land sleeps 'neath its own bright sky."
Thus while he spoke the sound of harp and song
Ere now from distance heard, across the mere
Like birds in level flight came swift and strong;
And on the glittering shore in presence near
Such witching forms I saw as magic nights
Image, when right the spell, the crystal clear.
Processions ranged, and dance, and quaint delights,
Bubbles of joy's full glass, and vestments gay
With myriad hues, and gems from mountain heights,
And eyes more bright than these, and as the day
That knows not veil nor needs, the loveliness
Of naked forms, unshamed in careless play.
Then thus, ere question asked, that guide no less
Made to my thought reply, "Lest things beheld
Should the true meaning hide 'neath sight's excess,
Whom here thou seest from the full life withheld
Awhile by just decree, in longing pain
Frustrate by dreamy joys are captive held.
And some with frustrate toil their heads in vain
Would with fresh roses crown, and thirsting still
Some with hot lips elusive goblets drain.
All that on earth sufficed the sensuous will
Is present here in full, yet all and none
Can the deep want assuage, or craving still."
Awhile he paused; then with changed tones, as one
Who nears what fain he would not, yet for fleeing
No outlet finds, filled up the tale begun,
And said, "In narrower bounds of Fate's decreeing
Is our existence bound, our little day

"Has but with this fair realm commensurate being;
Till as a fount dried up, a faded ray
From a shot star, with all thou seest in place,
To the great depths we pass from form away.
I too with these must pass; with these my race
Ends in a blank, the goal; and all we are
Lost in unpersoned life and formless space,"
He ceased and wept; from sightless realms afar
Came answering sounds of grief, while from above
Darkened the heavens, all but the steadfast star
Changeless in change, the enfolding star of Love.

CANTO XVIII

From this seemingly preliminary region we approach the Seventh realm itself—My guide describes the Satyr's peculiar sphere of life—We now coast the stream which islands the seven kingdoms—The Satyr reappears in fresh beauty: he and the guide bear me across, and I see a fair country, on which we land—The Satyr vanishes as we enter the realm of Sensual Pleasure.

WHO by the victim deer fresh-slain has stood
  Afield, and the bright eye now glazed and dim
Has watched, and the fair limbs defiled with blood,
But has not inly wished that even on him
  Sooner than on that harmless helplessness
Had fallen of hasty fate the shadow grim?
At least not I; how then that just distress
  Of nature's veriest child unmoved could I
Behold, or my fast-thronging tears repress?
But he, my brother guide, whose spirit high
  Bent not to idle grief, with grave rebuke
Turned on my tear-stained cheeks a blameful eye.
Then in his own, of strength compact, he took
  My hand and gently pressed, and to his own
Upraised in half-reproach my downward look:
And thus; "By fairest forms the shadows thrown
  Are fleeting none the less; by change, whate'er

"Exists, or soon or late must form disown.
Nor vigorous seeming life, nor beauty rare
In form and shape may but one hour outlast
The power that wrought them, and the type they wear.
The present joy is theirs; future or past
Can vex them not nor harm; not theirs but thine
The shadowed grief in semblance o'er thee cast.
The flower that fades with eve, the golden line
Traced by a dying day, the yellowing leaf,
The showers that passing gleam, the suns that shine,—
Each while it lasts complete, existence brief
Sums as eterne; nor here for querulous moan
Is room, nor idle tears of sensuous grief.
No guerdon his t' attain, nor fault t' atone,
With Nature one the Faun; nor passion's chain
Draws him astray; thyself hast forged thy own."

We approach the seventh realm, and my guide discourses with me of things not to be here communicated.

"The stream whose banks," thus spoke my guide, "along
Our pathway leads, whose circling waters sweep
Past yon fair land in current swift and strong,
From the far fountains of the limitless deep
Its source derives and flow, where change and time
Are girdled-in by the all-sustaining sleep.
On these, time's farthest shores, the sevenfold clime
An island shows, no more, though wide in view
Reach the broad plains, cloud-high the mountains climb."
Here paused his speech awhile, then thus, "Renew
The memoried scene, when passed the perilous height

"Oped on thy wondering gaze the landscape new,
And know of all that hour revealed to sight
Nothing untrod but this remains, th' abode
Of pain as bliss and darkness masked as light."
Scarce had he spoke when midway, where the road
Down to the margent led, and crystal-pure
O'er furrowed sands downshelved the waters flowed,
He who at first our steps with playful lure
Had through the forest led, then left awhile,
Before us stood, the vision's Cynosure.
In Ida's groves, or Sylvan-haunted isle,
Samos or ancient Crete, no shape more fair
Greeted with answering glance an Oread's smile.
Round his lithe limbs in joyous clasp the air
Burst into meteor light; a staff entwined
With vine and rose his poising hand upbore.

The Satyr explains that he and the Guide must bear me across the waters—On the other side a fair landscape, a region of pleasure, appears.

And O, such was my thought, if this the cage
That keeps imprisoned Love, what paradise
Can to deliverance hence Desire engage?
If all so sweet the failure, what the prize
Offered to victory's grasp? or who these joys
Beholding, want or pain could here surmise?

We hear sweet music, and land.

Then spoke that sylvan form, "The mandate given
By her whose realm thou seest, Nature's abode
Favoured o'er all, though hers be all the seven,
Have I this hour fulfilled; thus far the road
Through joyous scenes or sad, pleasure or pain
To mortals due, mortal thyself hast trod."

Here I am to learn Life's last deceit—The Satyr vanishes.

Then spoke my brother guide; "In part his tale
He told, in part concealed; nor even here
Wholly the mist dispelled, withdrawn the veil,
Though the far verge of time's enfolding sphere
Hast thou attained, and on the margin stood
Ringed by the stillness of the dateless year:"
Nor added more; but to the neighbouring wood
My following footsteps led, the central grove
Of the seventh realm, where bide whom sensuous good
Drew from the better choice, the Uranian Love.

CANTO XIX

Love as Queen of the world is sung by two choirs, gay and sad : Gay representing the old Greek Satyr and Nymph existence : Sad, the state of human creatures devoted to the senses—In them I feel my past life reflected—Certain Asiatic voluptuary sovereigns are now seen, whilst Queen Love shines forth in higher beauty—Sardanapalus tells us his experiences of pleasure and satiety.

MISTRESS and fount of all delight that earth
  By mount or fruitful plain, by air and sky
Portions to all who of her womb have birth ;—
Queen of the . . . spell whose witchery
  Subtle as fire, as death resistless, leaves
Barren the land, the fountain choked and dry ;—
Lady of pitying grace, whose favour weaves
  Bands for the world's deep wound ; from whose full treasure
Each want supply, each anguish balm receives ;—
Lady of cruel pain, whose daemon pleasure
  Is in the torture fed of those by fate
Drawn in thy clueless maze of magic measure :—
Thine from the untempered chaos to create
  All form, all life, all beauty ; these by thee
Framed and to fullness brought, attend thy state :—
Thine the all-reaching blight, the poison-tree

Whose roots this earth entwine, whose branching shade
Blots to not-being all *fairest* things that be :—
In thee our hopes, our joys; in thee pourtrayed
All that of ours is best; in thee whate'er
Has music, art, or rarest nature made.
All precious . . ., all loveliest known and rare,
Touched by thy wand, of beast, or flower, or bird,
Wither in dust deform and perish there.

I marvel at what I hear and see;

For there from fountain-marge and forest green
Satyr and Nymph and Oread, every form
Broidered on the young world's terraqueous screen,
Hymned on the right her praise; as breezes warm
From isles of Indian spice, the music sweet
Breathed the whole heart of that bi-natured swarm.
O happy heart, in its own love complete!
O happy love, that heart's fit denizen!
O happy life, such heart, such love, to greet!

An array, young and old, mustered on the other side of Love's throne, stood in sad repentance, so

That with their grief I grieved; a like lament
To theirs, as like the cause; nor alien all
From mine their fault, nor the fault's chastisement.
As who, when first a guest, some galleried hall
With curious care explores, and pleased surveys
Gay with the pictured past each panelled wall;
And some t' ancestral blame, and some to praise
Witness in scene pourtrayed; but all to him
Alien, as of stranger race and distant days;
If sudden these amidst in form or limb
He his own semblance sees, and *action*, thought
Unknown imaged beholds in semblance grim,

Amazed he stares, and "By what magic brought
Hither," he thinks, this portent ill, from old
By prescient hate or sorcerer's malice wrought,—
So in an alien tale my own o'ertold
Beholding these, I read from first to last
As on a pictured screen by priests unrolled,
Through every realm of trial-change o'erpast
From the high proffered crown, that o'er the gate
Pendant allures, to the far-margined waste.

My guide warns and comforts me.

This said, he pointed where in midmost throng
Of those his words declared, a seemly band,
Clad in such robes as to great kings belong,
In silent conclave sate; not by the strand
Of Egypt's desolate stream more proudly calm
Memnon's vast bulk o'erlooks the Ophian land.

I see Venus now in highest splendour, with Asiatic adorers before her—Sardanapalus asks our sympathy, and tells his glory, his pleasures, his satiety, and his greatest grief, the remaining sting of vain desire.

CANTO XX

Roman chiefs appear : Lucullus, Caesar,—those who failed to fulfil their higher aims,—Sylla, and others ; Antony with Cleopatra ; then Alcibiades is seen, and by him his friend Socrates—He describes the fall of Greece and his own death, with a vague prophetic intimation of a greater Martyrdom.

He ceased ; and from around, the kindred throng
Monarchs and shadows of that earlier day,
Took up of frustrate life the choral song,
Sad music to sad words ; but she whose sway
In her own living right was manifest there,
Smiled her acceptance of that penitent lay.
And to her smile that wanton crowd and fair,
Sylvans and Nymphs and Fauns and Dryades,
Brightened with answering smiles the woodland air.
O'er the whelmed treasures of the . . . seas
So smile the gleaming waves, a smile that ill
With the lost wrecks itself beguiled agrees.
But I from those strange founts in hope to fill
My spirit's eager thirst, my farther view
Raised to the summit of a neighbouring hill,
Where in fair robes and calm aspect a crew
Of honoured strain, so seemed their guise, apart
From those who joyed or mourned, enthroned I knew.

I recognize Lucullus and others who threw away great actions for pleasant sloth : Here is Sylla :

Smiling he sat, with roses crowned, as who
Had heart's desire attained ; but o'er his head
With blood-stained wings outstretched a horror flew.

There also lies the headless trunk of Mark Antony :—

While thus my guide ; "As fullest orbed the moon
Nearest eclipse is found, as winter bare
Lurks ambushed in the leafy boughs of June,
So to fulfilled desire desire's despair
Is twinned in earth's vain dream, and worst of ill
Memoried, or future feared, is present there.
And who most fenced with self-enjoyment, still
Is from enjoyment most shut out ; nor long
From love's true source self-sundered flows the rill."

Then Cleopatra, and others whose

lightsome mood
Game of life's earnest, earnest made of game.
And these amidst, as 'mid a gathered brood
Of sea-fowl towers the great bird to snows
Antarctic known, a mighty form there stood.
Fair as a god's his form, but manhood's rose
Bloomed on his sunburnt cheek, nor lacked the trace
Of labouring thought, and passion's wayward throes.
Yet as the noonday plain in light, in grace
So was each feature steeped ; nor care nor crime
Could mar the calm perfection of that face.
[Though] stained the pages of thy storied time
With crimes and cares, yet through all ages who,
O son of Clinias, to thy height may climb ?
As some rare Indian flower in scent and hue
Peerless as poisonous known, allures and kills,

A upas-bloom to Greece that beauty grew.
In beauty's Circe-cup thy deadliest ills,
  Hellas, were mixed; through her the power malign
On fairest things its worst designs fulfils.
Thus while I mused and gazed, a beckoning sign
  Drew me towards the mount, summoned by him
The glory and shame of old Alcmaeon's[1] line.
There at my near approach an outline dim
  In wondrous form deform was there, as Pan
Masked for Silenus in Evoeian[2] whim.

My guide paints the character and career of Alcibiades —The gay crowd vanishes,

And the brute phalanx-swarms of Thracian brood
O'er murdered Hellas drew th' Emathian shroud.[3]

Plato then appears, and tells the vanity of pleasure disjoined from virtue.

"This thy predestinate doom, Athena, mourned
  By man-befriending gods; for linked with thine
In whelming gloom earth's freshness was inurned.
And others there are, lands by slow decline
  To like dishonour led, from age to age
Silver with dross, with water mixed the wine.
This was I ware; what most was mine the page,
  Shrine of undying truth, may tell; the hate
Of envy bred, the accuser's perjured rage,
These mixed the hemlock cup; by these the fate
  Portioned to worth's excess; in me fulfilled
Loomed the presentment of each later date,
But more——" Here ceased abrupt his speech, as thrilled
  By a far thought, a lightning flash that clove
The infinite depths of being, till lost and stilled
  In the white radiance of unpersonal Love.

[1] The great family from which Alcibiades claimed descent, through his mother Deinomache. [2] Bacchanalian.
[3] The lordship of Alexander.

CANTO XXI

A fair scene opens: It is the Italian Renaissance—Petrarch, as the Chief, is singing—The Sicilian Idyllists; the English, characterized—Lament and prophecy for Italy.

May morns, May flowers, May meadows, May delights,
To these the song was tuned that, where we stood
Rose to my ear from thwart the laurelled heights.
Sweet were the notes and strange that the dull blood
To livelier pulses quivering waked, as when
Thrills to the cuckoo's note the summer wood,
And life itself to music turned; and then,
Most like sharp discord, silence came, or ill
At jar with good, till flowed the notes again.
Then said my brother-guide; "Beyond the hill
Fronting our view, in their own bounds apart
A songster band the vale with music fill.
These,—when from Western beauty, Western art,
Slow passed the shades of barbarous night, the dawn
Waked to new life long-slain Ausonia's heart,—
From wrangling faction-cries and hate withdrawn,
Of Grecian form and Roman stateliness
Fenced for themselves a fancy-guarded lawn;
Famine without and blood and sore distress
Of field and town; but they, secure of harm,

"Toyed with the hours in pleasure's still recess;
Nor birthright pride, nor stranger-wrong the charm
Could loose their soul that bound, or tune the strain
To patriot notes, or nerve the listless arm.
Or if for a brief space aroused, again
With womanish plaint or children's rhymester-play
In tinsel folds they wrapped the nobler pain."
Then I, "Nor Siren all, nor Muse, their lay
Yet took my boyhood's ear; and glad would I
The songsters' selves in their own realm survey."

This my guide promises me.

Discoursing thus from the hyacinthine hill
Down by the plain we passed, where rippling wound
Seaward in liquid light a narrow rill;
Such home by Borneo's shores or Java's sound
O'erbowered by branching green, the fisher lone
'Mid brackish streams and sweet has often found.
Behind, bright leaves and flowery perfume blown
By summer's panting breath; before was rolled
In measureless depths to sight time's ocean zone.
But these and those betwixt, on textured gold
'Mid the moist grass outspread, an artful tale
Of loveless love the bard of Arqua told.
As mirrored flame in ice the radiance pale
O'er face and forehead shone; and still the song
Rang falsely sweet, a mourner's purposed wail.
With laurel crowned, chiefest his peers among,
In spangled vesture decked, a prince he sate;
And at his feet in chequered shade the throng
With silver trump and lute and harp elate
His praise extol, who erst the *o'er*-laboured rhyme
With thought inwove, a coronal intricate.
Others on grassy banks, where flowering thyme
Thick under-carpet made, in shepherd guise

Played with old fancies of Arcadian prime.
Of pastoral loves they told, rank's rivalries,
With hopes and joys and fears that best the glade
Or village cot present *with* new disguise,
Blended with nature's truth; a paradise made
Nor wholly false nor real; an Eden dream,
From toil repose, from storm a guardian shade:
Till from Trinacria's [1] shores and Ladon's [2] stream
Lured to Ausonia,[3] thronged who first and best
Tuned to Libethrian notes [4] the sylvan theme,
Bion with Moschus joined, and thou, the guest
Of Hiero [5] known, but more of Pan; thy lay
For a lost Syrinx charmed the God's unrest.
And those whom the chill North's discoloured day
Yet reared, pale flowerets from the common blight
Exempt, a distant sun's declining ray,
By Windsor's storied banks,[6] or Cumbrian height,
When with faint *morn* the enchantress Geraldine
Broke the numb stillness of the April night.[7]
Now slack the strings and weak, severed the line
That present bound with past:

For that fair vine is now leafless and sapless.

O fallen from thy free self, O ill protected
From the brute swarms of spoil, dear Italy!
Beauty and art and love's true lore rejected
By earth's degenerate sons, awhile in thee
Their refuge found and home; but all too brief
The respite given, by jealous destiny,

[1] Sicily. [2] A river in Arcadia. [3] Here used for *Sicily*.
[4] Notes of the Muses. [5] Theocritus.
[6] Pope's *Pastorals*.
[7] Possibly a vague reference to the song of Fitztravers of Naworth upon the legend of Lord Surrey's Geraldine (*Lay of the Last Minstrel*, Canto vi.)

Short day, short joy; too long the night, the grief,
The foul disguise, the wasted lives, the shame,—
Slave to each lord, prize to each neighbour thief;
Till, once Imperial hailed, thy ancient name
Was for a byword known, and all thy praise
Turned to contempt, to foul reproach thy fame.
Alas the hundred Tales,[1] alas the lays
Lombard and Tuscan heard, alas the joy,
The pageant pomp, the boast of golden days,—
Ill-omened mirth, when he, the victim toy[2]
Of Nature's bounds outpast, foreshowed in death
Arts that unman, perfections that destroy.
All these before me passed, 'mid the hot breath
Of incense steamed from gold, and stifling scent
Of lily and rose, and Arno's violet wreath,
With priestly censers mixed; and 'mid them went
The artist despot prince,[3] of Cosmo's line
Noblest and vilest in one purpose blent.

† * * * †

Proteus of infinite form, thy mind a chord
Of magic range; now tuned to hymns divine,
To Bacchic orgies now; vassal and lord,
Despot and child of thy loved town, the spell
Of Cosmo thine, most cherished, most abhorred.

† * * * †

To the lone child of Yemen's sunburnt clan,
From Dahra . . . bound, where the red waste
Shuts on his little life its limitless span,
Nor shrub nor bush nor waymark there; effaced

[1] Boccaccio's *Decamerone*; perhaps also the earlier *Cento Novelle Antiche* may be alluded to.

[2] Unidentified.

[3] Lorenzo de' Medici.

All but the desert's self, as from the deep
Pass the light tracks by merchant venture traced;
And from his burning noon-tower steep by steep
Blood-red the day declines, but reckoning none
Of hours or bird or beast is there to keep;
Then where in measureless light the tyrannous sun
Curtains his westward slope, till sands and skies,
Distant and near, in that vast blue are one,
Sudden in stateliest hues of rainbow dyes
Compact, a landscape spreads, with grove and palm,
Palace and dome, before the wanderer's eyes,
And winding lakes with glassy coolness charm
His fevered sense, and pastures green, that tell
Of tended herds and flocks secure from harm;
These he beholds, and close before a well
Some little bower with coolness filled, that seems
Almost in reach, so strong the illusive spell;
Till as the marge he nears, the fount, the streams,
Palace and grove and field from sense and sight
Fade, as from opening eyelids *inmost* dreams:—
So passed thy dream Ausonia! last delight
And best to earth allowed; nor following time
The shattered vase may from its dust unite.
From Hellas first transfused Ausonia's clime
That beauty made her own, the light, the glow
Where Pleasure *nursed* her flower in full-grown prime;
Till burst the Helvetian storm, the robber foe,
Gaul's locust swarm accursed,[1] and leagued with hell
In fire and blood the dark Iberian woe;[2]
Till o'er waste field and tenantless cities fell
Silent and blank the night, a leaden gloom
Nor star might pierce nor lighted torch dispel.
Yet shall the dawn, . . . , return, the doom

[1] The invasions from Switzerland and France at close of fifteenth and beginning of sixteenth centuries.

[2] The Spanish rule in Italy.

For better years make place, nor Italy
Be but a desolate shrine, a shattered tomb;
Yet nor her bowers, nor aught the sunlit sky,
Encircling folds of earth, again may bear
That pleasure flower, the rose of springs gone by.
And green outspreads the garden leaf; but there
Blossom is none, nor joy; nor laughing Faun
Hides 'mid the boughs as erst, nor Oread fair.
Ended the joy, the feast; the Arcadian lawn
Herdless and shepherdless spreads; in vain they rove
Seeking who is not there, the god withdrawn
To his own shrine, Love absolute made in Love.

CANTO XXII

Follows now a lifeless land : all I have passed through vanishes from consciousness—We descend to the sea : my guide bids me cleanse my face : then all the past of my pilgrimage returns before me—He speaks of the ascent from the imperfect to perfection—I see the supreme Palace of Love, and Earth's false attractions below ; a flickering scene, beyond which the vision of the Star of absolute Light is for a moment allowed me.

On the lone margin of the utmost strand
We stood, my guide and I ; for void of all
That joyed or grieved was the here tenantless land ;
Nor beauty's late seen form ; nor answering call
Of song to song, nor pleasure's rainbow wing
Might the lost days of vanished *life* recall ;
But yellow sands, where shrub nor herb nor thing
That kinship even remotest claimed to mind
Or sense ; and speckless blue the ocean ring.
Not equinoctial seas, when wave and wind,
Curtained with sunlight, sleep, more lonely still ;
A blank, a fullness ; life with death entwined.
[As] on wide-bosomed lake or gliding rill,
Where in quick sparkling smiles of cheerful play
With joy instinct and life the waters thrill,
If from black Boreal caverns far away
Is breathed the wintry North, to ice congealed

All that bright mirror lifeless spreads and grey;
So of the secret shown, the depths unsealed
Late to my venturous gaze, the joys, the pain,
The self, long years unknown, to self revealed,
All then told and untold, from heart and brain
Had passed, a blank, a void; nor memory there
Nor thought, to conscious image might remain.
But he, the guardian power, whose constant care
Failed not, whate'er my need, on mine his hand
In guidance laid, as down the cushioned stair
Of grassy slopes we passed and terraced sand;
Where of that circling sea with even stroke
As sleeper's pulse the ripple beat the strand,
Nor movement else nor sound the silence broke.

My guide explains that our path henceforward is beyond the pale of human mind: He leads me on:

So at long journey's close who hastes to greet
The haunt of evening rest, by hedge and tree
Quickens his tread where opes the village street.
Then, where our steps by the unresting sea
Were stayed, again he spoke; "In time and space
This the fulfilment of thy fate's decree.
But first in the pure wave thy brow and face,
With travel stained and the dense airs that brood
O'er penal depths, cleanse from unmeet disgrace.
So with clear sight, and vigour fresh renewed,
May'st thou the brightness bear, the forms that shine
Symbols and reflex of the absolute Good."

I obey his command, and past pain and toil are obliterated.

So from my heart and brain the weight that lay
In numbness dark and cold, by the hid power

Of that pure wave dissolving passed away.
And all heard or beheld from that first hour
In the lone *vale* even to the utmost bound
Where now we stood, as from some giant tower
On a bare height upraised the landscape round
Map-like out-portioned lies, so clear dispread
As in one view the . . . coil unwound.
Not tangled now but clear life's single thread
In purposed mazes ran, and upward ever
Crooked or straight the innumerous texture led.
As swift and deep, his roadway cross, a river
The horseman forward bars; for bridge or ford
Around he strains his eyes in vain endeavour;
Or as the knot that save the Gordian sword,
Nought could resolve; or as the word unspoken
Alone could ope the spell-intrusted hoard,
So with vain toil of thought in all the token
Of first and last I sought, where the long chain
Linked world with world in circling coil unbroken.

I ask an explanation:

"And thus," the answer came, "the life that was
Or is, or yet shall be, from simplest mood
Through complex form to the absolute life must pass.

These souls remain till purged by the fire of vengeful love.

As by warm sunbeams pierced at morn retire
Thin mists from lake and hill, so the keen ray
Of love revealed scatters dull earth's desire;
Or as the vigorous swimmer casts away
What yet th' unpractised limbs upheld, so these
Rise from the imperfect to the perfect way.
But first the threefold zone of circling seas
The visioned bark must pass, till reached the shore,

"Where sits the guardian of the golden keys."
Thus having spoke, his words he stayed; nor more
Needed of speech or sign; so wide, so clear
The unlimited vision stretched my eyes before.
And from Life's basement courses, tier by tier
Upmounting to the lordliest pinnacle,
Love's palace towers o'erpeered the outmost sphere.
While far beneath, as in some mouldering cell
Flutters the spider's web, outstretched I saw,
By time and space cross-woven, earth's vexing spell.
O all-ensnaring net, of skill to draw
Whate'er its mesh enfolds, with personal life
Connatal thou,

† * * * †

O life of death compact, O priceless gold
Deep-veined in granite doom, O diamond heaven
Marred by dull earth and darkness manifold!
†As who through formless clouds by tempest riven
Of phantom lights and shades,† upgazing sees
The untroubled splendours of the circling Seven,
Nor the mad railings of the storm, nor seas
Dashed in tumultuous spray, nor hail-blent rain
May stain the brightness of that starry peace;
So the great calm of Love's all-circling reign
Showed 'mid the phantom whirl, the shadowy war
Of flickering light and shades, that pass and stain;
And these beyond, a luminous point, a star
Shone in the measureless depths, vivid and lone,
Centre and being of all things that are:
Semblance all else, or dark or bright; it shone
Absolute light, keen, insupportable.

† * * * †

O Light supreme, O self-subsistent, thou

Art of all light and life the sum! in thee
Mirror and mirrored ray no difference know.
Such was the vision, an instant seen, to me
On the utmost verge allowed; around, above,
Then all was blank; only the unfathomed sea
Circling the realms of peace, the realms of Love.

CANTO XXIII

A transformation into life and joy now seizes me—We stand on the shore, where lies a boat with sail, but no helm or steerer—A crowd of miserable beings who spurned Love gathers round and vanishes—Then the light reappears, and we pass mysteriously to the land of real Semblance—My guide sprinkles my brows, and I perceive things in their inmost being, in a vision of a crystal sea through which crimson flashes, with strange sounds of music.

Like Glaucus and Psyche I am transfigured into new life and gladness—We stand by the sea, whereon is a boat with sails but no helm—My guide encourages me to embark, but a mystic gloom darkens the shore: a vision, part a palace and part a tomb, is seen, with shapes of those whose name

EFFACED with their vain life has passed; for praise
Unworthy, self-adjudged; unworthy blame.
As one who unawares on noontide ways
Some dwarf mis-shaped or foul deformity,
Cripple or monster meets, his startled gaze
Frowning averts, nor cares with curious eye
But to prolong disgust; so faint I turned
From that vile crew's dishonoured memory.
Then thus my guide; "Not vain nor idly learned
The lesson taught by these, who the high prize

"Spurning of love, by love in turn are spurned.
Leave them; not this thy choice; thy destinies
Fulfilled await the crown, that on thy head
He wreathes who ne'er the promise made denies.
Nor thou thy word deny." No more he said,
But seaward signed the way, where like the morn
Dawned on the hills a silvery lustre spread.
Smit by that light the phantom brood of scorn
Faded as things that were not; through the air
Sounds of light wings and joyous tones were borne.
And full in front 'mid the bright splendour where
Purest the silver shone, again as erst
Broke the keen light beyond all light's compare;
And in that . . 's *creative* radiance burst
A vision on my sight, a happiness
As sight to blindness given, or drink to thirst;
That even now, in earth's exile, I bless
That moment's boon allowed, the memory given
Solace and staff through this world's wilderness.
But you whose venturous step awhile has striven
Thus far on mine to tend, more closely now
Follow the track through *net* and semblance riven
Even to the inmost truth; and from the bough
Of verse by art *entwined,* the mystic rose
Pluck while the guardian lords the boon allow.
Yet though revealed the circling bloom that glows
In crimson orbs of leaf, unthought, untold
Is the hid secret of the centre close.
—But I where the great sea's encircling fold
Girded the shadowy land, what next should be
Waited with hope by new fulfilment bold.
Not long; for as from watery pressure free
Upsprings the imprisoned air, or climbing flame
Skyward, in flickering spires unceasingly,
So from that semblance-land of praise or blame
Portioned in seeming time, with my true guide

I passed to the great realm without a name.
Unfelt by sense the passage; undescried
By ear, to ear untold; for sense and seeing
Discern not here, nor space nor time divide
The personal bounds of life; the laws decreeing
To each a temporal form, are fused and lost
In the keen radiance this of absolute being.
"Nor thou, this line o'erpassed, this barrier crost,
Canst aught perceive or know; and must abide
Blindest to light when light-illumined most.
For this the eternal love that aid and guide
Willed me to thee, has power conferred to show
Through semblance real what truth unveiled would hide.
For this from the bright fountain's central flow
With gathered drops thy eyes I touch, and make
Powerful thy eyes to see, thy heart to know."

My guide, my star, now shines out in perfect glory, and sprinkles my eyes and brow with drops of flame,

And at the touch all wondrous things e'en now
Viewless to my quenched sight, in clear display
Did to my sense their inmost self avow.
Not to the bard of Mantua's silver lay,
Nor Arno's raptured seer, the Elysian field
In *fount* and flower more aptly pictured lay
Than to my eyes, by those bright dews unsealed
Was the hid . . . , the changeless extasy
Beyond the veil in the veil's self revealed.
And this the vision showed. A crystal sea
Clearer than diamond fire, and through the mass
A crimson radiance flashed incessantly,
As wine through water seen, ere in the glass
To one confused, or when bright cords along
Electric fires in tremulous pulses pass.

But here to memory's task ill-matched my song
Fails from the marvels shown, as fails at need
The broken utterance of a stammering tongue.
Yet at thy word, O Love, my lines proceed
To climb, though weak themselves, yet urged by thee,
The difficult heights where thrones the eternal meed.
On the smooth mirror of that stormless sea
In our light boat we passed, where round the prow
That crimson radiance flashed incessantly.
And like strange sounds wood-wildered lovers know,
Heard through the golden leaves, from the far deep
Sweet sounds of music swelled in upward flow.
Like one whom trance enthrals, to restful sleep
Akin, yet diverse all, while heart and brain
O'er form and *hue* their watchful empire keep,
O'er the bright splendour of that liquid plain
So was I borne; as on a mother's breast
Lies a loved child, of mere existence fain.
What next befell in sequent verse expressed
Shall my true song declare, so favouring prove
The vision's lord and mine; my brother guest
At the great banquet of *subsistent* Love.

CANTO XXIV

A voice sings the bliss of Renunciation of Pleasure—It is Saint Francis of Assisi—The truth of his doctrine; his many followers—He recognizes them whencesoever they may come, the poor and wretched above all—But in this Love all created things have part.

"O HAPPY choice, that from earth's sensuous toys
Turned us to want and pain, and the vain shows
Of earth made footstones to immortal joys;
The sweet for bitter draught, the offered rose
We for the thorns resigned, for drink and feast
Hunger and thirst, vigil and fast we chose.
And as the process of the years increased
Our burden self-imposed, its added load
Heavier we made, when strength to bear was least.
Nor solace cool of shade nor rest our road
Gave to our toil-worn feet; barren and lone
The land we wended and the path we trode.
For as the covering glories of the sun
Each lesser light of heaven o'erveil, so wrought
In us the primal Love, the Eterne, the One,
That of nought else in earth or air the thought
Might in our mind have place, but only He,
Lord of our being, *effaced* the *rest* and *wrought*.
And all on earth or air or sky or sea

"Pleasant to sense or mind, in His compare
Was dross and dregs, and fraud and witchery.
Therefore from all we turned, as turns despair
From the dead hope to that sole Love that is
Truth of all loves that have been, are, or were.
Therefore, for want and pain, the fadeless bliss
Of absolute life is ours, and whom we loved
Seals on our lips the individual kiss.
The false reproving, by the false reproved,
Strangers on earth we fared, till th' open door
Of this true rest received us and approved."
Such greeting words, as the clear waters o'er
We passed, to me were borne, when at the sound
I turned, the speaker's self and form t' explore.
As by a meadowed plot of marshy ground
Of some rare flowers the purple majesty
Rises, that lesser blooms in court surround,
So through the watery floor and stainless sky
Gathered unnumbered forms that *circling* made
To one bright shape th' attendant galaxy;
Where in coarse garb of peasant guise arrayed,
Yet kingly none the less, in radiance pure
Assisi's shame and glory stood displayed.
Him whom nor threats to affray nor joys allure
Availed, nor kinship's claim, nor charms of home,
†From† the great bliss in naked Love secure.
For this, whate'er of price 'neath heaven's high dome
Is found, . . . he spurned, naked and bare [1]
Content in that one quest through earth to roam.
Till from Alverno's [2] height the herbless stone
With sudden roses blushed, and from on high
Love's martyr-seal in fourfold radiance shone.
And she,[3] bride of that seal, to passers-by

[1] *Sic* MS.
[2] Cell in the Apennines where S. Francis received the *Stigmata*.
[3] Poverty.

Long time reproach and shame, accepted now,
Knit to his own her perfect poverty.
With the true wisdom well, O Francis, thou
Show'dst the more excellent way; of Eden life
Thine with bare hand to pluck the fruitful bough.
All other leaf, all fruit, thy provident knife,
Divided, left to fade; from this to weave
The singular wreath, crown of a conqueror's strife.
As in the hour when warm the summer's eve
Broods o'er Parthenope's bay, the ready crowd
Of home and household friends and kinship leave
Oft unreturning take; with wailing loud
And hopeful cry commixed, to sea they fare,
As o'er the Atlantic wave a wind-driven cloud.
For of *deep* lands and summer pastures fair
They the report have heard, and wisely bold
The Here adventured for the promised There.
So to the voice of happier realms that told,
To loss of these assigned, a countless band
Their names obedient in those ranks enrolled;
And then by their great chief on either hand
Before me gathered stood, and each to each
Was of new fire and light a kindling brand.
I saw and inly thought; "The furthest reach
Of all-embracing life, of joy that knows not
Pause or defeat, the bliss denied to speech,
Here is attained; the lotus flower that grows not
On earth's dull lake, its bloom-enfolded treasure,
Plighted to these, on other quest bestows not."
Then on me smiled that glorious form, and "Measure,"
He said, "by what thou seest, our sum, or make
From *heart's* renounce the count of . . . less pleasure.
And know whate'er the name for whose loved sake
Who love the narrow path contend and steep,
They only all receive who all forsake.
Not Europe's shrines nor Asian temples keep

"Their altar's mystic flame; than fancied heavens more high [1]
Is the true lore, than creeds and priesthoods deep.
'Neath the pure blue of fair Ausonia's sky,
Or Syria's purple vault, or Indian glare
Of down-poured heat, or changeful canopy
Of China's worshipped heaven, the watchful care
Of all-embracing love has still provided
Who by this pathway pass, these garlands wear.
By system dimmed, by *purblind* sense derided,
In them the embodied truth abides, and [draws] [2]
Love's chosen few, by Love's own footsteps guided."
He ceased, and all that crowd with such applause
As on victorious chiefs a victor host
Bestows, and triumph song, made glad the pause.
Then I; "O of all those flower and boast
Who in the Sign [3] have part, that from earth's ill
To the true life has mightiest drawn and most,
If but in love be life, and hatred still
The bane of love, say by what art the twain
Harmonious made, one perfect life fulfil?

† * * * *

The stones our feet that bruise, the thorns that pain
Quick from a brother's path to move, nor less
On thy own pathway strew the torturing train." † [4]
With such a smile as bleakest wilderness
Might clothe with springing flowers, that patriarch chief
Disclosed the treasures of love's hid recess,
And thus; "Heaven's scattered rays on grass or leaf
Their gentlest influence pour; but, mirrored, burn
Of life-consuming darts a gathered sheaf.

[1] Perhaps omit *mystic*. [2] *Leads* in MS. [3] The Cross.
[4] Uncertain if these three lines were intended to be spoken by S. Francis.

"And the full stream poured from the Naiad's urn,
O'er level fields so gently flows, the eye
Scarce from the ripple's curve its course may learn,
If chance [where] narrow banks and steep deny
The wider course, it pass, with torrent force
The downward waters rage impetuously,
That rocks nor trees nor moorland bounds its course
May unremoved abide; the while in play
An infant's hand might bar the trickling source.
So love from self unwed, from earth's decay
By mere renouncement freed, its manifold stream
To one contracts, to one bright fire its ray.
But as whate'er the Sun's diffusive gleam
Lightens, o'er earth outspread, is found
Pictured and summed in each dividuous beam,
So all that flies in air or moves on ground,
Or cleaves a watery way, proportionate part
Has in the orb by love encircled round.
But most whom pinching want, or the keen smart
Of pain, or deadlier wound *detained*, my choice
Claimed as my own; these of my heart the heart.
What done to these is done to me, the voice
Heard of the incarnate Love, in loving deed
Bade me, though . . . by personal foes, rejoice.
Nor men alone but beasts of wood or mead,
And the swift birds of air, in them I knew
Brothers and partners of love's ample creed.
Nor beasts alone and birds, but lives that flew
Careless on insect wings, and what the deep
Engulphs, in love's magnetic cords I drew.
Nor these alone, but thin green leaves that keep
Their yearly task of shade, and silent flowers,
And the piled fruits of Autumn's golden heap,
Were in His love beloved; nor even the powers
Of earth and air and fire and flood, the wind,
Sunbeams and storm and snows and hail and showers,

"Were from that Love shut out; in all the mind,
Eye to the heart, the eternal loveliness
Beholds, to all beside fast closed and blind.
Therefore upgathered in that love's caress
Not many now but one; th' existence blent
With our own joy, for ever blest we bless."
Thus as he spoke, the o'erarching element
To purest radiance changed, and a great noise
As of innumerous harps in heard concent
Like thunder loud; yet . . . the higher voice
Uprose of songstress heard, the notes above
Of quire or band orchestral, hailed the choice
That claimed for earth well-lost the unearthly Love.

CANTO XXV

The guide announces our advance to higher regions—The lake now swarms with stars in mystic dance, which form a galaxy, wherein my guide, Canopus, is the central splendour—He explains that the perfect rest of the heavenly realm is threefold : first, S. Francis and his followers : now, those who have completely lost self — Among the lights I now see Saint Theresa : her glory : she tells me who are with her.

STUNNED by the vehement triumph-cry, with sight
Quelled by th' excessive radiance, as in swoon
Awhile I lay, nor recked if swift the flight
Or slow of what earth's dream by sun or moon
Reckons as time ; but in the abiding Now
Vanish as shades in equinoctial noon.
Thus as I lay the master's hand my brow
Touched with reviving fingers, while his glance
Was on the waters at the gliding prow.
" From the first rapture of the extatic trance
Granted to sense and memory, onward yet
To further life and kinglier crown advance.
The tangling meshes of earth's . . . net,
And with love's staff who broke, and single-hearted
Past to the goal, have in thy view been set.
Now whom love's keener edge in life disparted
From worthier snares than these, in visioned wise

"Shall to thy sense be by this hour imparted."
Then as in limitless depth of summer skies
Light fleeces form at noon, till all the blue
Is mottled o'er in vaporous fantasies;
So at the voice that spoke, the ocean view
Of fleckless crystal late, a mere expanse,
With myriad stars to bright confusion grew,—
Atoms of keenest light in tangled dance
That sharply flashed and moved; and now they wheel
In separate orbs, now in one line advance.
From some high gallery seen as whirls the reel
Of beauty's festal pride, when the high state
Of courts on worth approved sets yearly seal.
Nor speech nor thought was mine; content to sate
My eyes on the fair things, now singly clear,
Now in one brightness mazed and aggregate.
What next I saw to the uninitiate ear
How shall my verse declare? or how display
Beauty unveiled to eyesight dimmed and blear?
Yet must the tale be told; the sequent lay
Heeded or not be sung; so wills supreme
He whom o'er all I love, in all obey.
As in the changes of a midnight dream
When verges night to morn, the forms of sleep
New form, new movement take, as changed the theme
In which they share, yet their main semblance keep;
So those bright globes of light, whose glittering play
Rose from the . . . of the visioned deep:
For now as by one throb, each separate ray
Grew to a rounded disc, as buds of spring
Start into flowers at touch of amorous May.
And in the centre of each luminous ring,
But drawn in hues of light, for tint or shade
Here may nor form express or shadow fling,
A face, a likeness shone, a form arrayed
In light's diaphanous shine; of youthful prime,

Female or male, the living form pourtrayed.
A heaven of living stars, a chime
To music's heart attuned; a garden set
With flowers of every season, every clime,
Or diamond gems circled with emerald fret,—
So showed that happy throng, inwoven there,
Of absolute Life befitting coronet.
Then as at signal given the pageant rare
Changed, and those forms of beauteous portraiture
Again in keenest light infolded were.
Nor could my sight, though strengthened most, endure,—
For mortal sense t' immortal truth unequal
Must still remain,—that light's effulgence pure.
Nor were my words to those high marvels equal,
Could they acceptance find; but as a tongue
Not understood fail of the promised sequel.

This, however, is not the defect of the guide who inspires me.

And now those countless lights that swift and free
Like furnace-sparks were seen, from every side
Converging shone a steadfast galaxy;
Till of that dazzling zone the starry guide
Worshipped of men, when in Egyptian story
O'er Libya's vale Canopus throned in pride;
Now o'er Antarctic seas and loneness hoary
With glacier-snows up-piled, the hero prow[1]
He steers, of Austral night supremest glory;
To his own form and self transfigured now
The central splendour shone; and all the rest
Were as a halo to that kingly brow.
Then thus he spoke; "The love, the joys exprest
In those thou seest, than those beheld of late
In fuller life and nobler stand confest.

[1] See Book I. Canto i. l. 115.

"And know of absolute rest the perfect state,
Perfect in each, yet sequent in degree,
By threefold grade is given to contemplate.
They who from earthly goods naked and free
With the great chief Alverno's [1] mount ascended,
Are first, and outmost of the *encircling* three.
But higher those who, as Love willed, attended
On earth by Love's elect, from first to last
By that high aid as thou by me befriended,
Have with long toil and pain the bound o'erpast
That sunders self from self, and in the Eterne,
Not in themselves, their part and portion cast."
Then I; "Of this high meed, and those who earn
By toil or birthright place, not haply strange
E'en to my hope, more would I gladly learn."
But he; "'Mid the bright lives that moving range
From height to height, to whom thou will'st, thy prayer
Address, nor fear reply's denied exchange."
As who on some high feast a palace stair
Untrod before ascends, with anxious glance
'Mid countless faces strange and torches' flare
Some friendly form to see,—sweet countenance
With welcome of familiar smile; so I
On those keen splendours gazed, if so perchance
Might memory question aid or prompt reply.
But memory none nor sign; nor keenest sight
Of mutual knowledge there could aught descry.
Then more than ruby red, than diamond bright,
Where densest shone the clustered orbs, a ray
Changed to clear noon the darkness of my night.
And, as from central heaven downpoured, a day
On day's uprising dawned; such beauty there
O'ershone the brightness of its crowned display.
O flower of perfect Love, O fairest fair,

[1] Cf. Book II. Canto xvii. l. 120.

Iberia's boast and earth's, Theresa, thine
The form, the life, the grace, the granted prayer.
And thine the phoenix-heart by love divine
Transformed, consumed, renewed; and thine the wreath
Knit by the clusters of the mystic vine.
Pleasure in pain, in torture, joy in death;
The plant, the flower of life, was thine; to thee
Alike the heights above, the depth beneath.
O all-perfuming flower, O Eden tree
Fruitful of better life, what happy fate
Gave me thy power t' approach, thy glory see!
As a young Queen and fair in maiden state
Smiles on the suppliant throng, the while intent
They on her glance as birds on heaven wait:
Ev'n with such regal smile on me was bent
In pitying love that face, whose beauty none
Excels of all that deck love's firmament.
And as with sound of rippling streams in one
Blend sweetest notes of song's accord, a voice
Gave to the ear delight by the eye begun.
And thus the message came; "Brother, rejoice
In what this second realm unfolds for those
Who, chosen of Love, made of that Love their choice.
He, the deep centre of the eternal rose;
The circling petals they; from him their scent,
From him the hue that cheers, the fire that glows.
Till inmost self, connatal element
Of space-conditioned life, in that which most
From self abhors, was all consumed and spent.
Here the true rest and fullness; this the boast
Of death annulled by life; made perfect here
Banner and guerdon of Love's conquering host."
Thus while she spoke, the canopied atmosphere
One common glory shone; and with the glow
Reddened the triple depths of that still mere.

Till as in vaulted shrines when organs blow
To hymns of choral praise, such music sweet
Filled th' intermediate space with honeyed flow
Of sound's intensest thrill, that now my feet
Failed where I stood, and o'er my eyes a shade
Darkened, and ceased the mortal heart to beat,
By joy's excessive load crushed and o'er-weighed,
And self in vision lost :—such welcome prove
They who by earth's long torment perfect made,
Burn in the fires of all-consuming Love.

CANTO XXVI

All vanish save S. Theresa—She reveals that many paths from many nations lead to this kingdom—Spirits from the first five realms can reach it; those from the sixth and seventh only after long re-births; whilst other lower souls seem to be excluded —She passes, casting a regenerating ray upon me—I have the vision of the Head of the Saviour—Then another ray from my guide transports me to the highest sphere.

ROUSED from that swooning trance by touch of him,
My spirit's strength and guide, upwards again
I looked, nor dazzled now my sight nor dim;
But as quenched stars at dawn that glorious train
Now faint and far was seen, or as the ring
That shrouds heaven's queen from *menaced* storm and rain.
Only that loveliest Form,[1] fountain and spring
Of Carmel's renovate streams, as one fair dove
That bides, its comrades flown, with folded wing,
Yet to depart delayed; a mother's love
Was in her eyes, but on her queenly brow
Throned the vast wisdom of the gods above.
Then spoke my guide; "What mortal suits to know
Freely demand of her; for this the grace
Granted awhile, nor thou the gift forgo."

[1] S. Theresa, who founded the Reformed Carmelites or *Descalzos*.

As in a glass who fronting stands may trace
Things then behind him far, so clear I knew
My inmost thought mirrored in that bright face,
Yet to our nature's laws obedience true.
With question asked and answered, draught by draught,
Waters of life from that pure fount I drew.
And thus; "Upon life's tree the fruitful graft
If of its nature one, I fain would learn
From the great mistress of love's plastic craft.
And if the lonely cell and order stern
Be to these heights sole path, or other way
Lead through earth's lowlands to the summit bourne."
Then with pleased smile of earnest mixed with play,
As o'er her questioning child a mother's look
Is bent, while kisses yet her words delay;
So from the living leaves of that fair book
By love's own finger writ, with tenderness
Of dallying pause these sounds my hearing took.

† * * * †

"Then know, to this pure life's serenest height
Many the paths, not one; though speediest still
The narrower way close fenced by cloistered rite.
To me that path assigned, by heaven-taught skill
New fenced, new paved, new guarded, stair by stair
I brought to the summit of the *ambrosial* hill.
Happy, with me that path who choose, though rare
Who close my footsteps tread; more rare who climb
Through dust and mist of earth to the upper air.
But to no race confined nor creed nor clime
Is the strait path of love, . . .

† * * * †

To the great King with anguish crowned, whose throne
On self dethroned is reared, whoe'er their track

" Have set, open to these, and these alone.
And some from the great hero-town that hath
Its gates by the bright gardens where delayed
Thy earlier steps; they whom the envious wrath
Of the rude crowd and treason, undismayed,
True to love's compass-star, through blood and tears
Whiter than snow their ruddy garments made.
And some, though few their numbered tale, whose years
'Mid toils of court and camp, senate and field,
Taught them hid lore of the extra-solar spheres,
Where not to sense nor time nor space revealed
Is the unconditioned life; the realm from far
They saw, the word they read, the scroll unsealed.
But more who through earth's dust the ethereal car
Of Art triumphant bore, till their own art
For things that seem gave them the things that are;
And for the cunning brain informed the heart
With perfect form and grace, till the whole man
Grew of the imaged life himself a part.
And as some acted play, that sport began,
Haply to earnest turns, so these with truth
Filled up the mimicked outline of truth's plan.
More numerous yet the band whom bitter ruth
Of love by earth made void, like him beloved
Of love, has torn with Erymanthian tooth.
These with earth's brightest flowers inwove have proved
Earth's keenest venom-thorns; and each in turn
Have a false phantom found, a thing reproved.
Now clear of dregs and soil the purified urn;
Of self made self-less now, with the pure oil
Pressed from the life-tree's fruit, as stars they burn.
So late with weeds o'ergrown the furrowed soil
The riche[r] harvest bears, than the loose dust
Barren alike to man's neglect or toil.
And joined with these, nor numerous less, their trust
Who in the symbol placed; till love's own flower

"Grew, and aside the earthy covering thrust.
They who of Hellas born, th' Olympic power [1]
Of Elis' *shrine* revered, or answer sought
From old Dodona's grove, or Pythian bower;
Or by the lore on Syria's mountains taught
Shaped a more excellent way, or to the shrine
Of Heaven's pure Queen their votive offerings brought.
And where o'er Indian streams and palm-groves shine
Towered fanes of ancient faith, and the far East
From Western greed secure guards th' ocean-line:—
All these through imaged form from form released,
Have at one table sate; a different bowl
Each grasped; but one the nectar, one the feast.
They too who on pure limbs the Delphic stole
Have robed of spotless white, and in high verse
Have writ their name on great Apollo's scroll,
Or the plumed pomp of History's pictured hearse
Have led from age to age; or what, possest
By man, may help to sain man's primal curse,
Have taught or striven to teach; or meed of rest
Passionless, and fair life, fit recompense
Have of their toil, with their own blessings blest.
But not with these, not these, whose vain pretence
Of science false[ly] named, and arts that kill,
Has hope from life divided, truth from sense;
Nor they, though less removed, whom sensuous will
In fading roses binds,—not theirs assigned
The all-circling rest, nor th' empyrean hill.
For drink the Danaid sieve, for food the wind;
Life's phantom-fruit is theirs, *till* birth on birth
Renewed, the stains have cleansed, the dross refined.
With them, who from illusive forms of earth
Sought real heaven to frame, and nature's wail,
Ill-attuned revellers, mocked with songs of mirth:
And whom the twilight wood, and whom the vale

[1] The famous statue of Zeus by Phidias.

"Of spectre-tombs retains; and the great mass
By blame as praise rejected, and the tale
Of names in water writ; as shades on glass
Mirrored, or the light dust of summer heat,
Circling or blown transverse the eddies pass."
Here paused her voice; and as full quires repeat
The single note foregone, with answer loud
Of triumph rang the circling joy complete.
And as in zenith heavens a fleecy cloud
Melts in the infinite blue, so passed away
With their bright Queen [from] sight the attendant crowd.
But as she passed, even then a singular ray
From her own burning heart that glorious one
Darted on him, the guardian of my way;
And from a lake's calm surface as the sun
Reflex his image sends, so in my heart
Was lit the flame erst in those hearts begun.
And such desire as spoken words t' impart
Awaits not, thrilled my breast, and,—a quick throe,—
Life tore from life and self from self a part.
Nor personal sense could reach, nor thought could know
That unconditioned bliss, where several being
Is lost, as gold in sevenfold furnace glow.
But then connatal love, by heaven's decreeing
My guide even to the end, in harmony
As of twin stars his will with mine agreeing,
Thus to th' unsyllabled question made reply,
And said; "The boundless love, the rest supreme,
Will not thy just desire, dear friend, deny.
But save by those who from the illusive dream
Of time and space made free, . . .

† * * * †

. . . in sorrow lost and pain,

"Not for themselves but others, none the height
Thou seek'st, though almost won, may hope t' attain."
Thus while he spoke, his pointing hand my sight
Guided to midmost heaven, where overhead
Glowed the great convex with intensest light,
And vaster now than vastest heaven outspread;
Now a keen star-like point it gemmed; and now
Brightness at one with darkness, hope with dread.
And in its midst what seemed a kingly brow
With anguish crowned and empire vast had home,
One with the light, yet twinned, I knew not how.
As on thy night of nights, eternal Rome,
From far the pilgrim views in raptured gaze
Now crimson all, now white, the Titan dome;[1]
So with swift change, unchanging yet, the rays
Of that great glory shone, that even delight
Was not, all thought effaced in mere amaze.
Not long; for he, my vision's guide, in sight
To the vision's self transformed, on me, so long
His guarded charge, a shaft of purest light
From where he stood those secret joys among
Darted, that swift to highest height above
Bore me, that witness here might crown the song
Wreathed for the feast where thrones the bridegroom Love.

[1] The illumination of the cupola upon S. Peter's day.

CANTO XXVII

A Hymn to our Blessed Lord as God and Man by my guide, who commends me now to His guidance—I see inexpressive marvels, and the ultimate vision of Divine Love in the form of Man.

"Godhead and Manhood thou, limitless Life
In personal form here shown, of perfect peace
Maker and Lord, girt with the sword of strife;
Noted of all, possessing all, †th' increase†;
Throne of all visible things, yet all to thee
Lighter than down blown by the autumn breeze;
Grief's keenest pangs, joy's highest extasy
Are thine, in thy deep calm; the sheltering breast
Where all are one with love, and love with thee.
The infinite want, the fierce desire, the quest
Of unattained desire, in thee alone
Centered, fulfilment find and absolute rest.
A name of many names the crystal stone
Bound in thy diadem tress; but each to them
Whom to thy likeness chosen thou know'st, is known.

And others there are at thy vesture's hem;

Of these are we, thy suppliants; Child of earth
He who before thee bends; to me of heaven
Glory and singular star assigned from birth.
Him from life's promise-dawn to the dim even
Of joyless age, through trial years of sadness
My hand has led; with his my spirit striven.
Each grade of conscious life, from the dark madness
Of self informed with crime, to the pure day
Of love through torment perfect made in gladness,
His upward path has wound; nor further way

"Is to my guidance given; the rest is thine;
Thine the great vision; thine the guiding ray;
The gate, the palace-throne, the all-fruitful vine
Whose clusters glad the universe, that knows
Itself in thee, as thou thyself divine."
From far, so seemed it, as a wind that blows
Through the wood to us that voice was borne; but I
Knew in those words my vision's granted close.
And as in upward gaze unspoke reply
Of grateful mind I made, a sense unknown
To nature's self informed my heart and eye.
The eternal Now, the all-present Here, the throne
Of self-existent light, the happiness
Of limitless life, the rose-encircling zone,
Were visible there; yet for that sight the less
To speech proportioned they; for symbols none,
Finite themselves, may infinite things express.
And as bent eyes, how keen soe'er, the sun
Beheld, to darkness turn, and gazing more
Less apprehend, by their own sight o'erdone;
Or who some singular strain, long years before
Heard, would to mind recall; but . . . never
Can the one note from other notes restore;
So I to earth returned, with vain endeavour
In words of earthy mould the marvel tell
That from earth's sight the unlifted curtains sever.

Yet some may understand;

Many there are who run the race; yet each
But to his proper mark attains; and few
Who the high goal, love's crowning summit, reach.
The manifold mesh of life, the form, the hue
Pictured in pictured space, of these whate'er
Captive the affection leads, or glads the view,
All lovely things in ocean, earth, or air,
All joy of laughing youth, all empery,

By love and life wrought out in death's despair;
All joy of mortal skill, all harmony
Woven in the webs of sound; all fairest flowers
That glad the mead, all rainbow vaults of sky;
Not in their semblant show, but as the powers
Of which the vesture they, the substance hid
Whence are those shadows thrown, that build the powers
Of life's apparent home, but here amid
The eternal light, one with that light, revealed
In their own selves, to human view forbid:
And every deed of honoured memory, sealed
By Love's approving seal; and more by time
Or envious guile from later days concealed;
But most the martyr-love by hatred's crime
Victor in love confessed, and from the abyss
Of worst endured in passionate faith sublime;—
These in that splendour glowed, where all that is
Its ultimate meaning finds, where thrones supreme
Love blent with love in universal kiss.
—O First and Last, Sun of all worlds, thy beam
Is light and truth and love; their fountain-head
Is in thy orb; to thee returns their stream.
All separate life, all personal love, is dead
. . . or confront with thine; our sight between
And thy true vision the thick darkness spread.
O all-transforming vision, an instant seen,
Then for a night withdrawn, till the true morn
Scatter earth's hated night, dissolve the screen!
Yet though exiled the while, not all forlorn
Am I, nor shall this verse thy glory's praise,
Perish, an *empty* . . ., a theme outworn.
Once loved, for ever loved; nor hours nor days
Have o'er love's fabric power, the form its fire
Has stamped, changeless itself, all change outstays.
Nor from that vision seen [will] heart's desire
Turn to aught else its eyes, or from the height

Where now I stood to other height aspire.
As joys the bridegroom when the expected night
Gives to his loving arms the bride; as joys
The mother-bride at her first babe's first sight;
Nor the full cup o'erflows the marge, nor cloys
The satiate sense, nor more is there nor less,
Nor other draught the ambrosial fount alloys.
So from that orb of perfect loveliness
Nor truth nor love nor life divide; for [all]
Diverse in name, one absolute good express.
As who on Pisgah's height, or the great wall
Of Darien's Titan ridge, or erst who stood
On th' Euxine cliffs escaped from Persian thrall,
And their long toils and anxious fears, in mood
Of rest secure, surveyed, and more and more
Gazing, the assurance of their sight renewed;
Yet with more keen intent, as when a store
Of infinite gems and gold the wondering eye
Greets, I that vision's secret sought t' explore;
Nor vainly sought; for to the voiceless cry
Of my too eager love, in answer came
For dimness sight, for want satiety;
And from mid fires as when some sudden flame
Shoots a keen flash, so to my inmost view
At once revealed the ultimate vision came.
Not that the Eternal Life or old or new
Admits, or shadow of change; but now my sense
Quickened by love, to full attainment grew.
Then in the midmost orb, where most intense
That visioned radiance glowed, a Shape there showed
Of a Man's likeness, an Omnipresence
In human form subsistent; such it glowed,
Light of the encircling light, the central core
Of the great glory from that fount o'erflowed.
This I beheld pourtrayed, and wondered more
Whose that bright form and whence; fain to discern

What the far meaning, what the imaged lore.
But as faint outlined on the horizon sky
Some distant sail, just seen, or outlined coast,
The more we gaze, the more eludes the eye;
So now distinct now blurred, that vision crossed
Or seemed to cross my sight; till my whole thought
Faltered, in quick desire perplexed and lost.
Till perfect now the Love that in me wrought
Unveiled the impersonate truth displayed; the Life
That to all life life and deliverance brought;
In whom closed was the breach; th' envenomed knife
Of death to healing made, healed the deep wound,
Nor will with will, nor self with self at strife.
And for great Nature's secular wail, a sound
Of infinite harps to separate harmony
Attuned, and the great goal's extremest bound.
This the pre-ordinate end, the purpose high
Of Love through all diffused, from all again
Centered and bound in personality.
Not wavering now nor faint, but without stain
Pictured in dazzling light, the Form I knew
Whose beauty draws all life, whose hands contain.
Me too those hands contained, that beauty drew
Never to sunder more; in him the want
Summed and complete; the vision sealed and true.
This the pre-ordinate rest; this the great Mount
Where thrones the changeless Life, whose heights above
Are as his depths beneath; hence flows the Fount,
Hither returns, of th' all-encircling Love.

JAN. 31, 1888.

L.D.

End of the Vision of Life